

## Book Reviews

**Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics. Fifteenth Edition.** Edited by Richard E. Behrman, Robert M. Kliegman, Ann M. Arvin, and Waldo E. Nelson. 2200 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, WB Saunders, 1996. \$95. ISBN 0-7216-5578-5.

The purpose of a textbook is to serve as a reference source for all of the compiled information relating to a certain area of study. By necessity this information must be digested and condensed to allow for comprehensive coverage within a single tome. That which does not fit should be referenced to guide the reader to additional sources. The reason for a new edition of a textbook is to discard information that is no longer held to be essential or correct and to add newly discovered information as well as more recent references.

The *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics* has a long history of providing the essentials of the broad field of general pediatrics to both students and clinicians. This 15th edition comes 4 years since the last, and while the basic format is quite similar to previous editions, substantial changes have been made. Ann Arvin has replaced Victor Vaughn as one of the editors, and the list of contributors has been expanded from 137 to 221, of whom 154 are new. Its size has grown slightly from 1965 to 2200 (actual) pages, including an additional page of color plates of classic physical findings and six more pages to the table of contents. Chapter organization and the numbering system are new. The latter might affect those who use the table of contents numbers to reference their personal files. The use of contrasting colors for major subject headings was unfortunately deleted.

With regard to structure, the first section covers such general concepts as acute care, well care, nutrition, growth and development, and behavior. Next is genetics, metabolic diseases, and sections on the newborn and adolescent, followed by immune, allergic, rheumatic, and infectious diseases. Finally there is an anatomically arranged accounting of diseases of all the body systems. Tables display normal laboratory values (with conversion factors for micrograms to millimoles), drug dosages (including indications and precautions), and a listing of the contents of food products, infant formulas, and intravenous fluid solutions. Updates and additions address newer concepts of gene therapy, the *Hantavirus*, bone marrow transplantation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (including material from the PALS course), and guidelines for the treatment of asthma and otitis media. A spot check of some recent advances found inclusion of gabapentin for the treatment of epilepsy, deoxyribonuclease for use in cystic fibrosis (approved in 1994), and a discussion of the use of human recombinant erythropoietin. The section on the human immunodeficiency virus has been shortened and seems less complete, and there is only brief mention of varicella vaccine. References in almost

every section have been revised and updated.

In summary, this new edition contains considerable revision, maintains a very comprehensive coverage of the entire scope of pediatrics, and carries on the long tradition of excellence that has sustained it as a standard in its field for many years.

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**Handbook of Ambulatory Medicine.** By Philip D. Zieve. Edited by L. Randol Barker, John R. Burton, and Philip D. Zieve. 665 pp., illustrated. Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins, 1995. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN 0-683-09374-6

The *Handbook of Ambulatory Medicine* is an abridged, pocket-sized version of the fourth edition of *Principles of Ambulatory Medicine* by Zieve, Barker, and Burton. The full text has been reviewed elsewhere and is well-known as an excellent and extensive treatment of ambulatory medicine. My review will address the pocket-sized version only. It is important to note that I consider the full text to be a valuable addition to any primary care physician's library. If you did not like the full text, then you will not like this abridged version and need not read any further.

Those of you who like Zieve, Barker and Burton's *Principles of Ambulatory Medicine* probably own it. The question then is why should you buy this abridged version. In his preface, Dr. Zieve notes that "[t]he objective of this book is to provide the most important information of the larger text and to serve as a springboard to the larger text when more detailed descriptions are required." He also notes the popularity of abridged versions of larger texts, partly because of cost and partly because of the need to acquire essential information quickly and easily. As will be discussed below, I am not sure that these reasons justify buying this book.

As does the larger text, this handbook deals primarily with ambulatory internal medicine, although there are also chapters on psychiatric and behavioral problems, selected general surgical problems, gynecologic problems, problems of the eyes and ears, and skin, feet, and dental problems. It has excellent tables, charts, and illustrations, and takes an evidence-based approach to care of patients. There are several tables that would serve as excellent patient education handouts. This information and more are included in the parent text. Unlike the parent text, however, there is a crowded feel to this handbook, similar to that of the information-packed note cards I used to carry as a resident. These note cards were helpful to me, but they were not particularly user-friendly to others trying to decipher them.

This brings me to the question of whether this book is worth buying. The original medical handbooks were the Washington University internal medicine "Wash

manual," and the *Harriet Lane Handbook of Pediatrics*. These books were and are directed at the busy resident and intern, who need quick access to reference and management information but cannot be dragging big reference texts around the hospital. I am not convinced that these factors play a role in the life of an ambulatory care physician. If I have a question about an internal medicine problem in my office, I can walk down the hall to my bookshelf and consult *Principles of Ambulatory Medicine*.

During the past few weeks I have tried to use the *Handbook of Ambulatory Medicine* as much as possible. Most of the time, however, I found myself going to the larger text for more in-depth information. In short, I do not think the environment in which I practice justifies the loss of information required to achieve a handbook of small size. Moreover, if this handbook indeed serves as a springboard to the larger text, then I need to own two books rather than one, which negates the cost-saving argument for the smaller book.

In sum, although I think the information in this handbook is excellent, it suffers in comparison with its mother text. In some fields handbooks are a necessity, but I am not convinced that office-based ambulatory care is such a field. Nevertheless, if one likes handbooks, the *Handbook of Ambulatory Medicine* contains a lot of good information taken from a widely used, well-respected text.

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**Gellis & Kagan's Current Pediatric Therapy. Fifteenth Edition.** Edited by Fredric D. Burg, Julie R. Ingelfinger, Ellen R. Wald, and Richard A. Polin. 894 pp. Philadelphia, WB Saunders, 1996. \$75. ISBN 0-7216-5016-3.

*Gellis & Kagan's Current Pediatric Therapy*, in its 15th edition, is under new editors. This standard reference is written by more than 400 contributing authors, each dealing with a particular area of expertise. The emphasis is on therapy, but diagnosis is not ignored. Therapeutic advice is very specific, describing each author's preference for treatment rather than a summary of the evidence for various treatment options. Cost is occasionally mentioned, but cost-efficacy balances and options are not a focus of this book.

I found the text well organized by body systems, with several layers of subheadings guiding the reader quickly to needed information. A variety of tables summarize the most important complex information. Advice includes practical measures for patient and parental education as well as specific therapy.

The book is comprehensive, presenting unusual and severe conditions along with those more commonly encountered, but it omits some common conditions family physicians often see. For example, I did not find information regarding enuresis or otitis externa. I did find the section on behavioral disorders to be particularly relevant to my practice, however, dealing with

such everyday issues as divorce, death, and learning difficulties.

In the middle of a practice day, the pediatrics book I want to consult most often should guide me in the diagnostic evaluation of problems I seldom encounter and remind me of drugs of choice and dosages for diseases I recognize but seldom treat. At other times I might want to consult a text that explores various sides of a controversy about treatment. This book is not intended for any of those purposes; it is more a manual to read at the end of a day to guide the therapy of an unusually sick child.

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**Manson's Tropical Diseases. Twentieth Edition.** Edited by Gordon C. Cook. 1779 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, WB Saunders, 1996. \$115. ISBN 0-7020-1764-7.

The importance of international health and tropical medicine has increased dramatically with the years. The world is rapidly becoming a global community because of increased travel and immigration and the spread of diseases related to poverty, malnutrition, and altered host defenses. It is now necessary for practicing physicians to consider, almost daily, diseases in their differential diagnosis that only a generation ago were regarded as curiosities. Furthermore, physicians are often asked to provide preventive care and advice to patients visiting a variety of foreign countries. Ominously, as global warming continues, it is likely that the viral, bacterial, protozoan, and helminthic diseases formerly found primarily in the tropics will affect an even larger proportion of the world's population, further challenging physicians' clinical acumen.

On the positive side, however, the physician has a superb reference available to serve as a guide through this sobering morass of afflictions. *Manson's Tropical Diseases* has been the classic text on international health and tropical diseases since 1898. In spite of its preeminent position, the current editor, Dr. Gordon C. Cook, has undertaken what he describes as a "radical overhaul." This 20th edition is a monumental effort spanning the fields of geographic medicine and tropical disease from the molecular pathogenesis of malaria to the public health aspects of vector control. This multiauthored textbook of primarily British contributors is well written, consistently edited, and a pleasure to read. Each chapter is clearly divided with easily located subheadings. The text is extensively illustrated with maps, diagrams, drawings, histopathologic sections, radiographic presentations that are carefully reproduced and easy to interpret, and a large number of clinical photographs, many of which are in color.

In addition to thorough coverage of infectious diseases, practical advice is provided in such diverse topics as orthopedic problems, unique psychiatric disorders encountered in tropical countries, environmental issues, including the serious health hazard of smoking,