

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,