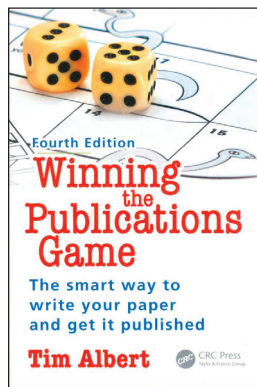


Book Reviews

Winning the Publications Game: The smart way to write your paper and get it published. Tim Albert. CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida, USA, 2016. 141 pp, price not mentioned. ISBN 978-1-78523-011-0.



Young academics today are under enormous pressure to become 'published authors' in order to further or even sustain their careers. This is often the—perhaps unfair—yardstick by which their academic worth is measured. It is also the reason for the large number of books in the market on how to write scientific papers. Most of these books take the would-be writer through the details of what a good scientific paper should contain.

This book is different. It targets the 'how' and not 'what' of writing. It

shows the researcher how to 'translate the science ... into publishable papers' in ten successive steps. Each of these steps is further broken down into bite-size, easily digestible chunks.

The first step is to 'Know the game'. The author lists the common problems faced by writers, criteria on which papers are accepted, and demystifies scientific publishing by exposing the less-than-rosy reality. He approaches the task of writing as a marketing exercise, in which the would-be writer is the supplier and the target journal the market. A refreshingly different point of view, and one that would surely make any newbie writer feel 'in control'!

The second step is to 'Know yourself', or identify the goal of writing and set it down in writing. 'Set the brief' helps to identify the main message of the article, the target journal, length of the article, deadline and criteria by which to decide on co-authors. A checklist is given to start the process. Although this step may take time to think through, the author emphasizes that it is crucial.

'Expand the brief' deals with moving ideas from one's head onto paper in the form of a spidergram and expanding this by adding relevant points and subpoints. At the end of this exercise, the outline of the article begins to emerge. This chapter is perhaps one of the most useful, as it deconstructs the onerous process of writing into small baby steps.

What follows from here is fleshing out the structure by expanding the ideas on paper into paragraphs; one for each idea. The concept of a key sentence is introduced here. An interesting piece of research done by the author some years ago showed that, most often, a biomedical original article has two paragraphs for the Introduction, seven each for the Methods and Results, and six paragraphs for the Discussion. The first and last sentences of the Introduction and Discussion have a key sentence each. The author explains succinctly what should go into each of the sections.

The new writer is now ready to 'Write the first draft'. The author suggests putting the first draft 'to rest' for a while before coming back to it in order to look at it objectively. The chapter on rewriting contains some useful tips, such as the 'yellow marker' test (Fig. 7.2) and the First six words test (Fig. 7.3).

The chapter on reviewing contains valuable suggestions on how to deal with comments from internal reviewers, both voluntary and compulsory ones, and tactful handling of the latter. The final

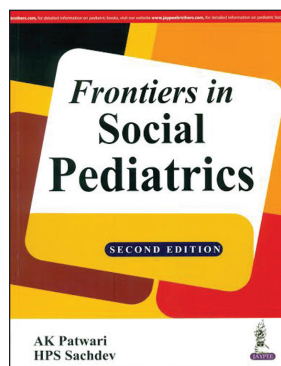
chapter 'Sending off the package' deals not only with the process of sending the article but also with what happens in the editor's office ('black hole'). How to cope with rejection is an important aspect of this chapter.

This small book packs a lot of punch. It is full of nuggets of wisdom, drawn from the author's decades of experience as an author, editor and trainer. It is also peppered with figures, checklists and a checkpoint at the end of each chapter to test whether the reader is ready to move on to the next chapter. A unique aspect of this book is 'Bookchoice', in which the author recommends a book for further reading, followed by a brief description of the contents. I have made a list of books that I 'must' read.

The first edition of this book was the outcome of a course devised by the author to teach young doctors and researchers how to write and publish a scientific paper. That it is now in its fourth edition testifies to its immense and ongoing relevance and popularity. The book is well designed and presented. Being an editor, I looked hard for typos and other errors, but found none! If you are looking to publish your paper in a journal of your choice and be assured of getting it published, this is the right book for you.

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Frontiers in Social Pediatrics. A.K. Patwari, H.P.S. Sachdev (eds). Second edition. Jaypee Brothers Medical, New Delhi, 2016. 442 pp, price not mentioned.



Social paediatrics is a community approach to child health. With this definition, the title of this book is posited in contrast to clinical paediatrics. The book is designed more like a textbook, and it is positioned for use in postgraduate training in paediatrics and community medicine, but I think the book has a reasonable quality and structure for use in child care at a societal level.

'It takes a village to raise a child'.¹ This African proverb captures the imperative to consider macro-environmental factors such as societal, community and institutional determinants as well as micro-environmental determinants such as intra- and inter-personal issues. This well-planned book has captured these aspects rather well.

The book is arranged in sections that look separately at maternal and child health, nutrition, child rights, epidemiology and national health programmes. The book is edited by two eminent academic paediatricians who have tackled questions of child health at a

societal level. The authors are drawn from medical colleges and select multilateral organizations working in child health. I could not find names of many field practitioners of social paediatrics in the list of contributors. The book is slickly produced with good-quality printing and liberal use of figures and tables. Each chapter has a tightly worded abstract in the beginning making it easier for the reader to delve into the full chapter. The initial table of contents has the title of each chapter followed by the section subtitles allowing the reader to easily find the desired topic. This partially covers up for a rather poor index at the end. I could not find in the index more than half a dozen topics. I wanted to search in the book.

What can one hope from reading social paediatrics? One can hope that graduates of social paediatrics will continue to work towards social justice by practising in underserved inner-city health centres such as slums, community hospitals or rural medical centres. One can hope that they serve as health policy advocates, health administrators and leaders in community medicine. They could use their social paediatrics training in subspecialties or global health, bringing a community-oriented approach. But most of all I would hope that postgraduates in paediatrics would underpin their everyday clinical work with these considerations and knowledge of determinants. Overall, it is hoped that we increase social capital as a whole and work in political and social spheres for health equity for all.

The book has a strong content on national health programmes and puts together essential information on them in a single book, thereby making it easy for postgraduate students. The sections on newborn, child and adolescent health and on nutrition are well written and are the strength of this book. The section curiously titled 'Everyday Practice' has ethical issues and medicolegal aspects being discussed. I would have liked the chapter on ethics to discuss more issues; e.g. I did not find anything about ethics of taking gifts and samples from drug companies, vaccine manufacturers or milk formula manufacturers or for attending or organizing conferences, etc.

It is well known that there is limited understanding among paediatricians about child rights and little systematic training on how paediatricians can support child rights in clinical settings. Further, there is hardly any research and academic writing on the practice of child rights in health settings. The section on child rights, abuse and neglect and child labour is written well, and is a strong contribution of the book.

What I found glaringly lacking in this section was a discussion of child health along income quintiles. I would have liked to see a discussion on the extent and effects of social inequalities in child health with proposed policy implications for child health professionals and action points for children's organizations.

The effects of poverty on children's health and well-being are well documented. Poor children have increased infant mortality, higher rates of low birth weight and subsequent health and developmental problems, increased frequency and severity of chronic diseases such as asthma, greater food insecurity with poorer nutrition and growth, poorer access to quality healthcare, increased unintentional injury and mortality, poorer oral health, lower immunization rates, and increased rates of obesity and its complications.

Austerity measures being taken by national governments are pushing increasing numbers of children into poverty. Paediatricians and their national and international associations wishing to promote the health and well-being of children need to be fully aware of the impact of such austerity measures on children they care for and on

the entire child population. Families with children are disproportionately affected by these cuts as has been seen in several middle- and high-income countries. Most low-income countries cut spending on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially on education and social protection, as a direct result of their economic crisis. This has affected child health. I would have wished that these links would have found a place in this wonderful book.

I did not find any discussion on vulnerable groups such as the tribal child. There is no discussion on the rural child as opposed to children growing in urban areas. There is nothing much about the needs of the migrant child, or a child in a slum, or those who have been displaced due to civil strife or due to development projects. Together these groups constitute a sizable proportion of all children.

The book is positioned as a textbook, and is successful in that respect. It may not lead to much debate or discussion on controversial issues, which the authors have carefully avoided. For example, the doubts and debates on 'new vaccines' have been sanitized and only technical knowledge is presented in the relevant chapter.

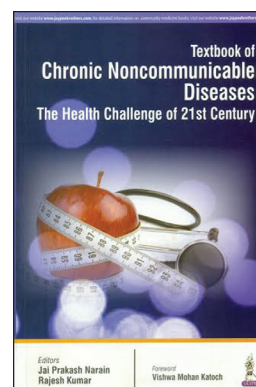
Having worked in social paediatrics for over 15 years, I still learnt much from reading this book. I strongly recommend this book to all practitioners of child health.

REFERENCE

1 Available at www.afriprov.org/african-proverb-of-the-month/23-1998proverbs/137-november-1998-proverb.html (accessed on 10 Feb 2016).

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Textbook of Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases: The health challenge of 21st century. Jai Prakash Narain, Rajesh Kumar (eds). Jaypee Brothers Medical, New Delhi, 2016. 274 pp, price not mentioned. ISBN 978-93-5250-043-7.



This well-written, systematic and comprehensive book is both useful and timely in the context of the rising burden of chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs). NCDs have become a major public health problem both in India and globally. The authors have largely focused on the four major NCDs (i.e. cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes) as well as mental health. The initial chapter focuses on the burden, impact, priorities, key preventive and control interventions related to NCDs at the global and regional levels (especially the Southeast Asia region), followed by a chapter to understand the social, cultural, economic, environmental and behavioural context

of NCDs. Chapter 3 describes nicely, in a point-wise manner, the lessons learnt globally, and provides a useful list of cost-effective interventions and the nine global targets for the prevention and control of NCDs by 2025. Chapter 4 beautifully carries out an epidemiological situational analysis of the current trends of NCDs and the risk factors prevalent in India, with useful updates on the progress of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke (NPCDCS), and describes the national NCD monitoring framework. Chapters 5–10 discuss the major NCDs separately in greater detail summing up the book with chapters on primary and secondary prevention strategies, links to communicable diseases and lessons learnt from their control, health system requirements and research priorities, finally ending in a chapter that highlights the need for global efforts through multi-stakeholder approach.

The chapters are contributed by subject experts from varied backgrounds, most of them with vast experience in their respective fields. This makes each chapter unique in terms of its content, flow and manner of presentation. Whereas this is an obvious strength of the book, it throws up some challenges for readers of diverse backgrounds. Some chapters (e.g. Chapters 8 and 12) have a largely biomedical and clinical orientation and deal less with prevention, cost-effective care, population awareness, policy issues, etc. Some other chapters deal more with epidemiology and cost-effective strategies for prevention and control of NCDs. Thus, a greater uniformity (at least for certain sections) in the layout and contents of chapters would have made this book equally appealing to people with both core medical and public health backgrounds, which is also the authors' aim. A section highlighting the most cost-effective strategies related to the prevention and control of each of the NCDs at the primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare level would have given an added advantage to this book.

Though some chapters (Chapter 4) showcase the importance of injuries, a separate chapter would have been really helpful. Discussing other important public health problems such as chronic kidney disease and stroke in greater detail could also have been a valuable addition to this book. Similarly, some chapters discuss the usefulness of health information system in NCDs (Chapter 17) and mobile health (Chapter 18), but the growing role of information technology in NCDs, especially mobile health (mhealth), telemedicine, decision support systems and electronic medical records certainly deserve more space in the book. Even though Chapter 13 has possibly identified all the priority research

questions, it would have been an ideal place to introduce newer research methods such as implementation research, operational research and health services research, which are particularly important in the context of NCDs, owing to their long-term care needs, which is often a burden on the health system. Recent developments in home-based care, palliative care, rehabilitation science and alternative medicine should be key considerations for the next edition of this book.

This book will be useful for students of public health, researchers, programme managers and policy-makers working in the domain of NCDs, as well as clinicians involved in delivering NCD care. This book will help clinicians approach NCDs in a broader population perspective. Similarly, public health researchers and professionals will gain useful insight into the basics of pathophysiology and natural history of NCDs, their risk factors, diagnosis, complications and management in an easily understandable form, which is crucial for developing public health interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs—because many public health students and professionals have a non-medical background.

Overall, the clarity of presentation is good in most chapters and the topics of individual chapters go well with the contents in it, highlighting what is most important to know in that particular area. For example, Chapter 7 has discussed in great detail, the most important aspect in care of cancers, i.e. screening. The book uses up-to-date evidence in the literature related to NCDs in almost all the chapters, and this would serve as an excellent resource for anyone wanting to understand related issues in greater depth. Though the tables and figures usually supplement the flow of text and fit in nicely, it is difficult to distinguish between the legends of many figures, which makes it difficult to interpret the graphs and charts correctly. The use of colour in illustrations (especially those highlighting differences, e.g. Figures 1, 3 and 4 in Chapter 4) would have really helped, although it would have added to the cost.

This highly recommended book will serve as an excellent resource for anyone interested in the epidemiology and different dimensions of NCD prevention and control. This field is changing fast, so a revision might be required every 3–5 years.

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