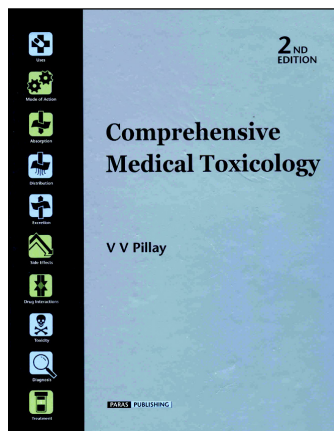


Book Reviews

Comprehensive Medical Toxicology (Second edition). V.V. Pillay. Paras Medical Publisher, Hyderabad, 2008. 1202 pp, Rs 895. ISBN 978-8-8191-226-8.



The second edition of this book starts afresh with all the latest updates in medical toxicology. It is a comprehensive, large format book that covers all aspects of the subject.

The book has been divided into 5 major sections starting with general toxicology. This section consists of the epidemiology, diagnosis and management of poisoning; which have been extensively discussed. Text notes and tables add to the impact of the

chapters. The importance of a Poison Information Centre has also been mentioned—it is indeed the need of the hour. The author has updated information on the management of patients with poisoning. The toxidromes of poisons and their indications, antidotes and their availability are given, which will help physicians working in emergency settings. Medicolegal considerations have been discussed in the Indian context with updated references. This will be of use to forensic experts.

The second section on analytical toxicology is an important area. Topics concerning basic screening tests for various poisons, handling of sophisticated instruments and principles of analytical procedures have been discussed with great care; these will be useful for clinicians. The author has also discussed heavy metal poisoning with reference to ancient times. The book gives requisite information on the toxicity of heavy metals.

In the chapter on pesticides, the author has distinguished the currently used pesticides with their class and trade names, highlighting the banned ones with updated references. Gases that cause a toxic impact on the environment and are hazardous to human beings have also been dealt with adequately in the section on chemical toxicology.

The pharmaceutical toxicology section has 7 chapters where different classes of drugs and their toxicological impact have been discussed. Emphasis has been placed on the fatal dose, toxic derivatives, drug interactions and adverse drug reactions. Peak plasma levels of various drugs and their eliminations have been incorporated in this edition of the book. The author has discussed new drugs used in diseases such as Alzheimer and Parkinsonism, supported by a number of references.

The section on biotoxicology discusses plant poisoning under different subheads—cardiotoxic plants, neurotoxic plants, hepatotoxic plants and miscellaneous plant products with photographs of the relevant species. The chapter on venomous snakes and snake bites is well written and includes identification of snakes. It also incorporates the recent protocol for the management of patients with snakebites.

The author has concluded the book by summing up the issues concerning sociomedical toxicology. In addition to comprehensive

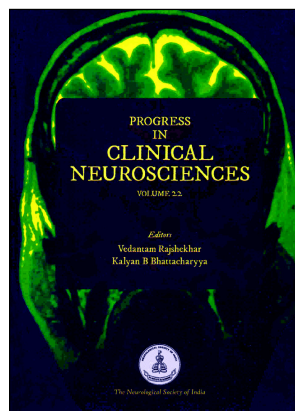
accounts of standard drugs such as cocaine and LSD, it covers inhalant drugs used by adolescents belonging to a poor socioeconomic background. The appendices on poisoning severity score, Glasgow Coma Scale, list of forensic science laboratories in India, Beck Depression Scale are relevant. There is an index indicating brand names in bold.

The book provides an overview of medical toxicology and is well organized. The layout is good. The paper quality is adequate. However, the printing quality could have been better. The author has laid emphasis on all areas of forensic importance in the discussions. The book provides a lot of information to the reader. The text boxes in the book provide brief but relevant information on the subject. Historical glimpses and information about some events occasionally appear redundant as poisoning history has been documented in various other textbooks of toxicology. One notices the absence of coloured photographs in the biotoxicology section. Nevertheless, the book provides relevant information in toxicology in a comprehensive manner. Undoubtedly, the author has done a commendable job. The book is moderately priced. I recommend this as a reference book to departments such as pharmacology, forensic medicine and toxicology, emergency medicine, and for poisons and drug information centres.

AMITA SRIVASTAVA

*National Poisons Information Centre
Department of Pharmacology
All India Institute of Medical Sciences
New Delhi
srivastava_amita@hotmail.com*

Progress in Clinical Neurosciences (Volume 22). Vedantam Rajshekhar, Kalyan B. Bhattacharyya (eds). Byword Books, Delhi, 2007. 324 pp, Rs 695. ISBN 81-8193-032-0.



This book deals with important topics in neurology and neurosurgery. The field of neurosciences is advancing rapidly and the understanding and treatment of neurological diseases is improving continuously. It is indeed a difficult task for neurologists and neurosurgeons, inundated as they are with clinical work, to keep track of these changes. This book is a timely piece of work that fulfils this need. Directed at consultants and trainees, the book covers a wide

array of topics. In the modern Indian milieu, an opening chapter on the intricacies of the Consumer Protection Act makes for useful reading. In the section on neurology, the important areas of cerebral-vascular diseases and movement disorders are covered by Indian as well as foreign experts. Some aspects of these

diseases, relevant to the Indian scenario, are highlighted. These would be very useful to a practising neurologist.

The neurosurgical section deals with the surgical aspects of cerebral infarctions and newer treatment modalities relating to the therapy of vascular diseases. These chapters complement the medical chapters and, along with a paper on neuroimaging, provide a complete picture of vascular disorders. The surgical chapters also deal with the management of tumours such as lymphomas, chordomas, astrocytomas and explore the use of endoscopes in colloid cysts of the third ventricle.

The publishers have used a large font for easy reading and the layout is pleasing. The diagrams and images are of a high quality. The speed of medical developments is astounding and the shelf-life of all medical books is shortening, but the authors have succeeded in their aim of providing current information to their readers. Reasonably priced, this book is a welcome addition to personal collections and libraries.

S. V. KHADILKAR

Department of Neurology

Grant Medical College and Sir J.J. Group of Hospitals

Mumbai

Maharashtra

khadilkar@vsnl.com

IgA Nephropathy Today. Yasuhiko Tomino (ed). Karger AG, Basel, 2007. 266 pp, US\$ 207.25. ISBN 978-3-8055-8286-5.



Primary IgA nephropathy was first described in 1968 by Jean Berger, a pathologist at the Necker Hospital, Paris. It is now recognized as the commonest primary glomerulonephritis in the world. This antibody-mediated process is characterized by mesangial proliferation and deposits of IgA (chiefly IgA) and C3 in the mesangium. The disease presents most frequently with microscopic haematuria and non-nephrotic proteinuria. A small but significant

proportion of patients progress to end-stage kidney disease.

Researchers in the field of IgA nephropathy are a tightly knit community and are constantly in communication through the global IgA nephropathy network (<http://www.igan-world.org/main.htm>) and the European IgA nephropathy network (<http://www.igan.net/>).

This book is a compendium of the presentations at the Eleventh International Symposium on IgA Nephropathy held in October 2006. It covers a wide variety of topics in the form of clinical and basic reviews, followed by a series of scientific papers and, finally, the complete set of abstracts presented during the meeting. The articles have been internally peer-reviewed. This symposium

was held at Tokyo and a regional bias is evident with a majority of contributions coming from Japan. A majority of the scientific work on this condition is also perhaps going on in Japan.

The clinical topics are mainly directly towards exploration of different treatment modalities of this intractable condition and include discussion on the use of corticosteroids, fish oil, mycophenolate mofetil, drugs acting on the angiotensin-aldosterone axis, anticoagulants and other immunosuppressive drugs. The Japanese approach of tonsillectomy is highlighted in several papers though surprisingly it has not found favour in the rest of the world despite the impressive results obtained in Japan. Almost all authors claim beneficial effects of the treatment regimens proposed by them, but such benefits have not translated into well-formed treatment guidelines. This remains a major deficiency of this work and would limit its appeal to clinical nephrologists who are on the constant lookout to find the best way of slowing down the unrelenting progression of this disease towards end-stage kidney failure. A lack of such recommendations is definitely disappointing.

Also not discussed well is the confusion over the histological classification of this entity. One chapter discusses the problems and reasons for this, failure of the existing systems in improving outcomes of patients with this disease while another mentions the efforts under way to develop one. Dr Dick Glasscock, the author of the last chapter, also expresses his disappointment over the failure to develop such a classification.

Recent years have seen major progress in the understanding of the pathogenesis of this condition, especially the aberrant glycosylation of IgA, its association with formation of immune complexes which then get deposited in the mesangial region and activate the cells normally resident there. Not surprisingly, several papers and abstracts explore various aspects of this abnormality and discuss how glomerular damage develops due to this phenomenon. Also discussed are the role of genetic factors, other growth factors and innate immune responses. Information on candidate genes, pathogenic role of Fc receptors and immune complex formation has been provided. Some animal models have been discussed but the value of these, in my opinion, remains limited.

Because of the very nature of this compilation, there is some overlap between the contents of different chapters, which is often jarring. Also, the quality of writing is uneven; some chapters towards the end are difficult to read.

Clinical nephrologists and physicians will find the first few chapters and the section on clinical advances useful. This book would be of particular interest to academic nephrologists, students and researchers looking for up-to-date information on basic advances, especially on pathogenesis and some unconventional treatment approaches. I would recommend Dr Dick Glasscock's scholarly 'Concluding remarks' to those looking for a thoughtful and critical overview of the advances in understanding how this disease develops and is currently managed. He also provides an insightful analysis of the issues that remain to be explored and presents clinicians and researchers with a set of challenges which, when solved, will improve the outlook for patients with this disease.

VIVEKANAND JHA

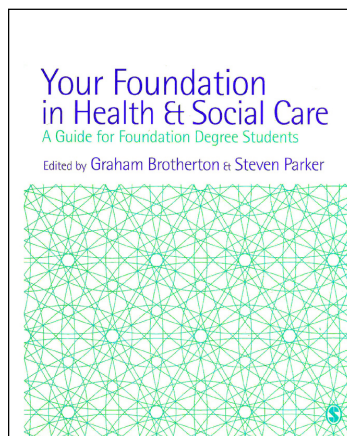
Department of Nephrology

Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research

Chandigarh

vjha@pginephro.org

Your Foundation in Health and Social Care. Graham Brotherton, Steven Parker. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2008. 251 pp, £ 18.99. ISBN 978-1-4129-2040-7.



The content of the book is well organized in the two sections on 'Approaches to learning' and 'Issues relevant to health and social care'. As a book catering to students of a foundation course, the authors have streamlined each chapter into learning objectives, theoretical content and activities, with a summary and suggestions for additional reading. The section on 'Approaches to learning' takes a student through

various learning methods, reading skills and managing time. It also emphasizes the process of reflection during theoretical learning and practical work under the guidance of a mentor. Mentoring and reflective learning are important components of the learning process, which are often ignored and the authors deserve to be commended for the first section on 'approaches to learning'.

Though this book is intended for students of foundation degree courses, the activities described are inadequate as they fail to guide a student through a step-by-step process. Some activities cannot be self-initiated by students and therefore one gets a feeling that this book can be a guide for teachers in health and social care.

The chapter on 'Psychology on health and social care' stands out for its beautiful style of presentation, lucid content, and simple and easy-to-perform activities. Psychological aspects of health and social care are generally neglected in theoretical and practical work, which makes this chapter very useful. The chapter on 'Interpersonal communication' is lucid but not exhaustive enough to explain the issues of communication in practical settings of social and healthcare.

The authors have touched on issues of gender, stigma and inequalities in the occurrence of illness and people's behaviour. The example of blindness is used to explain how a mismatch of people's and caregivers' perceptions on illness and care-seeking leads to stigma and therefore influences the types of interventions. But the authors make a rather weak attempt to explain how power structures in a society, gender and traditional ideas of patriarchy influence relationships in the hierarchy of caregivers and their interactions with those seeking care. The content on social context of health and social care, and values in practice, is extensive in theoretical frameworks but wanting in real-time examples rooted in healthcare. For example, the issues in chronic illness care could have been linked through these chapters to explain ethical issues in care.

The historical overview of the legal and organizational context of health and social care in the UK is a useful introduction to the current scenario. The chapter on 'Planning and managing care' is a theoretical review of the different approaches and arguments of case and care management in the current legal framework, but lacks practical examples of assessment and planning for managing health/social care in a specific setting. Though most of the examples are from the UK, the book could be used by students as

a practice guide to review similar situations in health and social care in their own countries.

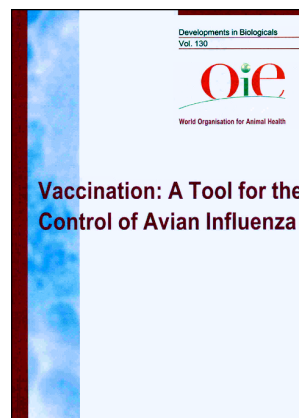
This book is welcome to students and teachers as it describes a framework for reflective learning, which is an important approach to learning in health and social care. Though the authors specify that each activity should include an element of reflection, the activities are limited as they only ask questions and do not describe how a student's reflection with a mentor and a student's reflection in a group can help in the learning process. Reflective learning is a new concept for students in health and social care and it would have been useful to demonstrate how reflection should be linked with learning.

R. SUKANYA

Community Health Cell
359, Srinivasa Nilaya

Jakkasandra 1st Main, 1st Block Koramangala
Bangalore
Karnataka
sukan_r@rediffmail.com

Vaccination: A Tool for the Control of Avian Influenza. Betty Dodet (ed). Karger, Basel, 2007. 196 pp, US\$ 188. ISBN 978-3-8055-8484-5.



This book is the outcome of a conference held in Verona, Italy in 2007. The papers presented at the conference have been compiled to give a broader insight into the highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) and its control through vaccination. The material contained in the book is presented in an organized manner. Updates on avian influenza, experiences in control of avian influenza in different countries, socioeconomic effects of vaccination, application of

vaccination, vaccine research, regulatory and trade aspects and integrated approaches to vaccination are discussed in different chapters. Considering the importance of the disease in the present-day context the publication is timely and noteworthy. The information provided in this book is valuable for research scientists and public health officials responsible for disease control. The guidelines provided in this book could be adapted for formulating control programmes for avian influenza by taking country-specific problems into account.

Targeting the disease at its source is the key to its successful control in poultry, thereby preventing human infection and death. This can be achieved by prompt diagnosis, culling, ban on transport and movement of birds from the infected zone, bio-security and surveillance. Combined with the above methods, many countries have used vaccination to control the disease. The strategies could be emergency, preventive and routine vaccination, which can be used in a mass or targeted manner. However, monitoring of vaccinated flock for the presence of wild type virus

is very important. This can be done by differentiating infected from vaccinated animals (DIVA), in this case the birds. Once the disease is effectively controlled, vaccination should be discontinued; thus an exit strategy is also required. Vaccination against avian influenza has been used on several occasions in recent years to control and, in some cases, to eradicate the disease. In countries with inadequate infrastructure, vaccination could reduce mortality and production losses. Eventually, vaccination decreases the prevalence of infection to a level at which stamping out and surveillance can eradicate the disease. An added advantage is that so far there are no known indications of negative effects on human health associated with vaccination of poultry or consumption of poultry products. The experience gained by the Russian Federation, Middle East, European Union, Asia, Africa, China, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Americas in the control of avian influenza could be useful for other countries.

Preserving genetic resources is also important. Highly pathogenic avian influenza is a major threat to poultry breeds and may lead to extinction of some species. Depending on the situation and the country involved, vaccination could be used to preserve valuable genetic stock including commercial, local and fancy birds.

The authors have provided information on currently available vaccines, which include homologous and heterogenous inactivated vaccines, genetically engineered vaccines such as viral vector vaccines and DNA vaccines. The authors have also provided important information that the genetic drift of the virus (field virus) over the years is not very crucial as the vaccine virus strain (H5N2) used in 1968 is effective even now. However, there are reports on vaccine failure too. Hence, the authors have emphasized that avian influenza vaccine strains should be tested regularly

against the currently circulating field virus to assess their efficacy.

Based on the latest scientific information on highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and the experiences of affected countries, the authors have provided a number of valuable recommendations for the control of the disease. If these measures are adopted by the concerned countries, the possibility of control of the disease is high and the emergence of a pandemic could be averted.

Overall, the book contains a lot of scientific information which would be valuable in planning the control of avian influenza. Though the information is current, some aspects such as the fear of mutation of the infecting field virus in vaccinated birds has not been addressed fully, possibly because of the lack of sufficient scientific data. It is likely that the demand for vaccine will increase in the coming years if the disease becomes entrenched in a region or a country. In such an event, what will be the global requirement of vaccine? Much research work is being done throughout the world on avian influenza including vaccine development. The scientific community may come up with superior technologies to combat the disease by vaccination and other preventive measures. Till newer information is available the book can be used as a reference book, as well as for guidance to control highly pathogenic avian influenza.

H. K. PRADHAN
National Consultant (Avian Influenza)
WHO Country Office
Sriram Bhartiya Kala Kendra
Copernicus Marg
New Delhi
hkpradhan45@rediffmail.com

Film Review

Taare Zameen Par. Director: Aamir Khan, Aamir Khan Productions, India, 2007.

In the past few years, Hindi films such as *Phir milenge* (HIV), *Black* (blindness) and *Munna Bhai, MBBS* have tried to address social and health issues. Aamir Khan, a reputed Indian actor, has directed and acted in this critically acclaimed and commercially successful film *Taare Zameen Par* (TZP). This is the story of a child with a special learning disability (dyslexia, SLD) and the film is being seen as a successful marriage between commercial and art cinema in India.

TZP is about a 9-year-old child, Ishaan (Darsheel Safari), who finds it difficult to learn in school and often fails in class tests. He ends up being a problem child for his teachers. In the same school, his elder brother always stands first and is also good in sports. Ishaan, however, is good at painting and possesses a very furtive imagination. His parents, educated and working [class], find it difficult to accept that their younger son is not performing as well as his elder sibling. Since social prestige is attached with his performance, he is often verbally and physically abused by his parents at home and the teachers at school. Frustrated by these

events, the parents send the child to a boarding school, where the teachers are hard task masters and the outcome is the same—he is unable to perform well in class. Ishaan goes into his shell, stops sketching and struggles to cope with the constant battering to his self-esteem.

Things change when a new art teacher, Mr Nikumbh (Aamir Khan), joins the school. His methods of teaching are innovative—through interaction, dance and play. Mr Nikumbh identifies Ishaan as having SLD. When he discusses the issue with Ishaan's parents, they are unable to accept his views and focus on the social aspects of Ishaan not doing well in school. It takes a scientific explanation and the disclosure by Mr Nikumbh that even he had SLD and could not do well in studies and, by special attention and training, he was doing as well as anybody else. He finally convinces Ishaan's parents. Then he gives special attention to Ishaan to enable him to harness his painting skills. A bit of sensitization of the school teachers brings the hidden talent of painting to the front and also brings back Ishaan. In summary, this film is the story of a child with dyslexia and his efforts to fit in, adjust and perform in a world of cut-throat competition and high parental expectations.

The film is a wonderful commentary on contemporary Indian society, where school performance and scoring good marks are akin to social acceptance. Children are never encouraged to take up any other activity. The prestige attached with standing first in school has been well presented. Although the storyline is a bit predictable and the film ends up with Ishaan winning a painting competition, the director has succeeded in sending a strong message that children with dyslexia are as normal as other children. The film connects well with every child and adult.

A recent Indian study has observed that the average age in India when children are diagnosed with SLD is 11.4 years, while the average age when symptoms in children were first noticed was 5.6 years. There is a long time lag between noticing symptoms and diagnosis.¹ If sufficient awareness is generated about dyslexia, it is possible that many children can be given due care and special treatment to bring out their hidden talents. Another study shows that parental education on SLD may provide beneficial effects in the training and care of such children.² The film has been successful in generating awareness about SLD and indeed sensitizing society to the needs of children with SLD.

The interesting point is that there is no reference to any doctor in the film. The child is given training in a school with other normal children, clearly underscoring that there is no need for

special arrangements or state-of-the-art facilities for children with SLD. It is commendable that the director has delivered this message with care and sensitivity. The film clearly touches the psyche of parents and the raw nerve of children. This film is likely to have a long-lasting impact on the manner in which society in general and children in particular view the needs of children with SLD. It hopefully will also have an impact on our 'conventional' educationists and education system, and make it more responsive to the needs of children with any kind of learning disability.

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CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA
Department of Community Medicine
Gajara Raja Medical College and Associated Hospitals
Gwalior
Madhya Pradesh
ck1800@gmail.com