

Evidence-Based Pediatrics and Child Health

Edited by: Virginia A Moyer, Elizabeth J Elliott, Robert L Davis, Ruth Gilbert, Terry Klassen, Stuart Logan, Craig Mellis and Katrina Williams. Pp.xxvii + 384. BMJ Books. 2001. ISBN 0-7279-1424-3. (Available from SAMA-HMPG. Price R790, members R715.)

If you are looking for a comprehensive evidence-based textbook on paediatrics this is not what you will get. This is a handbook to empower the reader to use the Internet as a source for evidenced-based paediatrics.

The introductory chapters include scientific thinking, finding the evidence and critical reading. These are followed by chapters on different topics, e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, asthma and prematurity. Case scenarios which are quite realistic for private and state hospital practice, are used throughout.

The chapters are structured in the following way: a case scenario is followed by a discussion on framing answerable questions, that may include questions on baseline risk (causation), diagnosis, intervention and therapy (prognosis).

The reader is then taken step by step through searching for evidence, discussing the websites used and how to use a mesh to yield appropriate results. The most appropriate search which will answer the questions, is pointed out. Once the electronic search is complete, the reader is taken through a critical appraisal of the articles found, discussing the good and bad points of research with specific relevance to the questions in hand. One is even taught how to work out relevant risks and predictive values from the results presented in the articles.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the scenario and what the authors feel is the most reasonable conclusion; some of this is also based on sound experience and sensible practices. There is also a table summarising the type of evidence, result and conclusions drawn for each question that was framed.

The references given are from 1977 to 1999, following the examples of the searches given in the chapters; more recent references would be easy to find. Using the knowledge gained in this book, one would be able to review them appropriately from an evidence-based perspective.

The topics covered are not comprehensive, e.g. there is not much on autism, but the skills gained by working through the book would empower the reader to tackle any problem that presents in the future and be able to frame appropriate questions, do a reasonable search, and a critical review of any topic that was presented.

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