



Your Child's Best Shot: A Parent's Guide to Vaccination

Canadian Paediatric Society's 1995-96 Infectious Diseases and Immunization Committee. 153 pp. Canadian Paediatric Society, Ottawa. 1997. \$21.95. ISBN 0-9695630-9-4

Overall rating: Very good
Strengths: Comprehensive coverage of childhood vaccines in Canada
Weaknesses: None
Audience: Parents, physicians, public health nurses and medical health officers

At a time when a small but vocal anti-immunization lobby persists in producing misinformation on the benefits of childhood immunization programs in Canada, this guide for parents fills a real need.

The CPS committee includes many of the leading experts in Canada on immunization programs. First, they describe the history of immunization. Then they review diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B by providing the history of each disease and up-to-date information on the germ, the illness, and the vaccine and the effectiveness of it.

Parents can read the best account available on the side effects of pertussis vaccine; how vaccines were used to eradicate polio from the Western hemisphere; how invasive Hib infection has become a rarity in Canada; why a 2-dose schedule of measles vaccination is necessary; and the efforts under way to protect all children from hepatitis B.

There is a short chapter on special purpose, foreign travel and new vaccines, and an excellent questions-and-answers chapter, which includes the important question: "What conditions are *not* reasons to delay vaccination?"

Apart from parents, this book will be helpful for all physicians involved in childhood immunization and an invaluable resource for public health nurses and medical health officers.

Timothy Johnstone, MB, BS, DPH
Victoria, BC

Health and Social Organization: Towards a Health Policy for the Twenty-first Century

Edited by David Blane, Eric Brunner and Richard Wilkinson. 326 pp. Illust. Routledge, New York. 1996. \$97.95, hardcover; \$27.95, paperback. ISBN 0-415-13069-7, hardcover; ISBN 0-415-13070-0, paperback

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Illustrations and figures used extensively to support data. The index, references and general layout
Weaknesses: Use of technical jargon without definition
Audience: The public, health professionals and policymakers

This collection of 16 papers marks the launch of the International Centre for Health and Society based at University College London. Twenty contributors from England, Canada and the US review the domain of population health. This volume is in direct continuity to *Why are some people healthy and others not? The determinants of health of population*, published in 1994 by the Canadian Institute of Advanced Research (CIAR). The two books have a similarity of purpose, which is enhanced by four contributors who are scientists affiliated with CIAR. The London Centre was launched in part because of strong encouragement from the Canadian group.

The purpose of these essays is to update and expand on the health determinants that are more closely related to the organization of society than to the structure of health care services. The text is well supported by more than 50 figures and as many tables; the reader is led methodically from the presentation of principles to the identification of their origin.

Part one examines the policy problem suggested by the social patterning of health and disease. A review of the implications imposed by observations drawn from the two Whitehall studies of British civil servants sets the framework of the next three parts. In these the roles of environment and economic growth, of family and the life course and of work and the characteristics of the labour market are discussed extensively. In the closing section, Fraser Mustard reviews the specific contribution of many social policies to improve human health, a timely summary in a turbulent era for many social programs.

This volume is of most interest to physicians who feel uncomfortable with some of the arguments with which population health specialists are framing health policy options for the future. This book contains all the information they need to assess the validity of these concepts. The authors meticulously explain that differences in health reflect differences in the circumstances in which people live and they argue why this has policy implications.

In contrast to health services, which are tailored after the characteristics of society, the population health is determined by a reasonably well-defined set of factors that transcend the singularity of each society. Hence the interest of the material found in this book; nowhere else will physicians find more readily all they need



to understand factors of population health that are not in the realm of clinical experience.

Fernand Turcotte, MD, MPH

Professor of preventive medicine and public health
Département de médecine sociale et préventive
Faculté de médecine
Université Laval
Québec, Qué.

The Human Genome Project and the Future of Health Care

Edited by Thomas H. Murray, Mark A. Rothstein and Robert F. Murray, Jr. *Medical Ethics Series*. Edited by David H. Smith and Robert M. Veatch. 248 pp. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1996. US\$29.95. ISBN 0-253-33213-3

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Highly competent treatment of diverse issues
Weaknesses: Insufficient scientific content and, for Canadian readers, its US focus
Audience: Those who deal with bioethics, public policy, health care provision and genetic counselling

The warning that new ethical dilemmas will soon be upon us is nowhere more common than when invoked in relation to the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the medical technologies it has spawned. To the great credit of this book's contributors, much of that topic is avoided. In its place one finds thoughtful accounts of whether and to what extent the HGP will alter health care practices. Although the contributors (physicians, lawyers, philosophers and psychologists) often engage in speculation, the book is

largely devoted to a practical discussion of the HGP and its implications for medical practice and social policy.

At the heart of these papers is the issue of information — *genetic* information — and the proper uses to which it may be put. All genetic information is not created equal. Given the complex and variable ways in which genetic mutations are expressed phenotypically and the fact that effective therapy does not exist for many such diseases (e.g., Huntington chorea), concern is expressed about what patients, physicians and counsellors ought to do when faced with genetic information of unknown predictive importance. In these sections of the book the common claim that newly available information can potentially lead to new ethical problems is arguably most apparent. One reads how genetic information about a patient may implicate the patient's family members and thus alter the nature of the physician-patient relationship in previously unheard of ways.

The book's ultimate message is that the HGP gives us a new impetus to confront many ethical issues. Genetic information becomes yet another variable in the complex calculus of, for example, scarce organ allocation or employment discrimination. This results not from the genetic information *per se*, but from society's general mistreatment of the disabled. In focusing on genetics as it relates to existing medical, ethical and social problems, the authors provide us with critical tools to effectively deploy when considering the HGP, as well as more general problems confronting us in the medical context.

Robert A. Crouch, MA
Doctoral candidate
Joint Centre for Bioethics
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ont.

Books and other media received

Livres et autres documents reçus

Books for patients

Comme une larme dans l'encrier : Récits d'une psychiatrie sensible. Paul Sidoun. 94 pp. Les éditions internationales Alain Stanké, Montréal (Qué.). 1997. \$14.95. ISBN 2-7604-0569-9

Where Did Mary Go: A Loving Husband's Struggle with Alzheimer's. Frank A. Wall. *Golden Age Series*. 148 pp. Illust. Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY. 1996. US\$19.95. ISBN 1-57392-070-3

Health care

The Online Guide to Healthcare Management and Medicine. Douglas Goldstein and Joyce Flory. 283 pp. Irwin Professional Publishing, Burr Ridge, Ill; McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Whitby, Ont. 1997. \$36.95. ISBN 0-7863-0885-0

History

100 Years of Doctoring. William Tatlow. 100 pp. Illust. W.F. Tatlow, Box 655, Hudson, QC J0P 1H0. 1997. \$12.

Miscellaneous

Contraceptive Research and Development: Looking to the Future. Edited by Polly F. Harrison and Allan Rosenfield. 519 pp. National Academy Press, Washington. 1996. US\$49.95. ISBN 0-309-05442-7

Fever: Basic Mechanisms and Management. 2nd ed. Edited by Philip A. Mackowiak. 506 pp. Illust. Lippincott-Raven, Philadelphia. 1997. US\$97.50. ISBN 0-397-51715-7