neonatal care. The book is organized into 3 parts: the first contains generic advice about drug handling and administration, the second contains the 156 drug monographs and the third is a set of 1-paragraph summaries about the use of 53 drugs during breast-feeding. The strengths of this book are the uniform, concise structure of the monographs and the number of drugs covered. However, there are some important weaknesses that limit the formulary’s usefulness in Canada. Therapeutic advice is offered along with the basic information about each drug. However, with only 2 or 3 references per monograph, the reader cannot distinguish between local and generally accepted practices. Also, the organization of the book by drug does not allow it to be used as a treatment guide. SI units for drug dosages are not consistently provided.

The most common questions asked in our pharmacy involve potential drug interactions and compatibility with intravenous solutions. I was disappointed, therefore, that these issues were not presented more clearly. For example, the erythromycin monograph contains a warning about its effect on theophylline metabolism, but the theophylline monograph does not contain a corresponding warning about erythromycin. The information provided about drug therapy during breast-feeding is limited.

Each perinatal unit should have a formulary that reflects local therapeutic and administrative practices. Additional resources are useful if they add value through critical reviews of the best available practices or through easy-to-use guides to drug use for patients who are exposed to multiple drugs. Although the Neonatal Formulary is very useful for the community in which it was created, it has important limitations in other countries.

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