An authoritative reference for trainees and experienced paediatric nephrologists

Clinical pediatric nephrology, 3rd edition

Kher KK, Schnaper HW, Greenbaum LA, editors
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In 2011, Peter Densen1 estimated that the doubling time of medical knowledge in 1950 was 50 years; in 1980, 7 years; and in 2010, 3.5 years. In 2020, it was projected to be 0.2 years — just 73 days. Almost out of necessity, continuously updated electronic databases, such as Up-To-Date (www.uptodate.com), have emerged to filter the mass of information and meet the need for readily available, continuously updated medical knowledge. Given the long lead time to publication, what then is the role of a textbook in the modern era of medical practice? In the preface to this book, the authors describe the main goal as a “primer of pediatric nephrology”. Last published in 2006, Clinical pediatric nephrology has been extensively updated, which has resulted in a much larger book (from almost 600 pages to over 1000) and may be considered by some beyond the realms of a “primer”. The information is targeted somewhere between the medical student and the experienced paediatric nephrologist, although both would find many of the chapters informative. The majority of authors are North American, which gives a slight bias, but overall the information is well balanced and regional differences in management are appropriately acknowledged. The book is well illustrated with colour diagrams and generous use of tables and figures — a particular strength given the target audience. The use of “key points” boxes highlight important learning elements and each chapter also has multiple choice review questions to test understanding. There is acknowledgement of the need for ready access via digital devices, with an e-book edition that can be used on multiple platforms and is much easier to search than the index of the print edition. Does this (or any) textbook still have relevance in our digital age? I think so, with some studies suggesting that people retain more of what they read in print. Although difficult to quantify, there also does seem to be more enjoyment in the experience of reading a book and Clinical pediatric nephrology will find a ready audience with trainees looking for an authoritative but easily read reference.

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