
SLMA Guidelines on Vaccines. Lucian Jayasuriya and Anura Weerasinghe, editors. Sri Lanka Medical Association, 2004. Pp 90. ISBN 955-9386-10-7

When were you last posed with a query about immunisation and stuck for an answer? You must have faced this situation many times in your career. This multi-author volume titled 'SLMA Guidelines on Vaccines' may be the answer to your predicament.

Vaccination (or immunisation) is an 'all time' mission in clinical practice. One needs continuous updating on the topic since new vaccines are added to the schedule frequently, indications change, some of them lose popularity and so on. It is all about keeping the healthy people healthy. Dr. Lucian Jayasuriya and Prof. Anura Weerasinghe have edited an excellent compilation, which goes beyond being 'guidelines' and encompass almost all the important aspects of immunisation in Sri Lanka.

The first edition of this book was published in 2001 and was well received albeit it only covered non-EPI vaccines. This second edition, published in late 2004, has taken a step further and covered all vaccines available in Sri Lanka, both EPI and non-EPI. Nineteen chapters are dedicated to individual vaccines, which give detailed descriptions of each. The layout of these chapters are conventional, starting with a brief description of the disease and then going on to describe the type, efficacy, indications, dosage and administration contraindications, adverse effects and storage requirements of each vaccine. Some chapters on important vaccines such as rabies and tetanus are complemented with figures, which depict schedules and indications with clarity. However, improvement of picture quality of some of these figures (e.g. Figure 2 in the DTP chapter) will definitely add to the value of the book.

It is clear that a lot of hard work has been put in by the specialist authors to ensure that each vaccine is comprehensively dealt with. Chapters on rubella, hepatitis B and rabies vaccines are noteworthy. Readers will be pleasantly surprised to discover that the book maintains quality in all the chapters despite its multi-authorship. The vaccines are alphabetically arranged, starting with the BCG and ending with yellow fever vaccine. One might wonder why the editors did not categorise them into EPI

and non-EPI at the outset and presented them so. It would have helped the reader to identify the category at a glance without referring to the schedules at the end of the book.

The language is simple and devoid of jargon throughout the volume. Each chapter ends with a few good references. In addition to up-to-date general information and guidelines on vaccines, the book addresses a number of special issues related to vaccines. Some of these are HIV and immunisation, management of anaphylaxis following immunisation, immunisation of the immunocompromised host and immunisation for international travel. The reader will find Chapter 25 particularly useful where a number of practical, real life problems related to vaccination are dealt with. Adding a few lines on managing common post-immunisation problems such as fever, irritability, and soreness and redness of vaccination site would have benefited the health care providers and also helped to dispel myths surrounding these issues.

There are a few useful charts at the end of the book. Of special significance is the colour coded, combined EPI and non-EPI immunisation schedule. This chart will help in verifying the immunisation status of an individual within a few seconds. The last page of the book is worth a special mention. It carries the specimen notification form for adverse effects following immunisation. This form should have been given more prominence. A 'check list' before administering a vaccine is worth considering a part of the guidelines.

This book should prove to be an invaluable reference to all health care providers in Sri Lanka, particularly family practitioners, paediatricians and immunisation clinic personnel who deal with issues of vaccination in their day-to-day practice. Medical students should find this book a treasure trove on immunisation with all the important aspects of the subject concentrated in a few pages. It should be available in immunisation clinics and all places where immunisation is carried out. It certainly deserves a place in all medical libraries.

The SLMA should be congratulated on this commendable endeavour.

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