

Book Reviews

Feeding and Nutrition of Infants and Young Children – Guidelines for the WHO European Region, with Emphasis on the Former Soviet Countries. K. Feischer Michaelse, L. Weaver, F. Branca and A. Robertson. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Publications, European Series, no.87. 2000. Swiss franc 82 or £47 (paperback). ISBN 92 890 1354 0

Poor nutrition in infancy and childhood can have both short- and long-term consequences. Short-term consequences include malnutrition, growth retardation, increased risk of infections and possibly premature death. Specific nutrient deficiencies may lead to delayed psychomotor development and impaired cognitive function. As for long-term consequences, malnutrition in the pre- and postnatal period has been associated with diseases in adulthood including CHD and non-insulin-dependent diabetes. Thus, optimum nutrition in infancy and childhood is essential for a healthy population.

In this book, many aspects of nutrition and feeding of infants and children are covered, with the aim of providing information that will help national experts to develop or update their current national feeding recommendations. There is an emphasis on Eastern European countries in particular, as their infant feeding practices are based on outdated recommendations. The target readership could include ministries of health, paediatricians, dietitians, nutrition scientists and public health and other health professionals interested in nutrition who are concerned with the health of young children.

The book is divided into twelve chapters. The first chapter gives a summary of the current status of child nutrition and feeding practices in some countries in the European Region. Chapters 2–6 cover the current recommendations for energy, macronutrients, and some micronutrients. In these chapters, the authors compare the recommendations made by the European Region, UK, USA and WHO. Breast-feeding and complementary feeding are covered in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 9 deals with the importance of the carer, factors that could cause a decreased level of care and resources that should be used to support the carer. Chapter 10 describes growth and development in the infant and child and details methods of growth assessment. Chapter 11 covers the area of dental health, including the current situation of dental caries in children and guidelines for improving dental health. The final chapter deals with food safety, covering both microbiological and chemical contamination of foods.

This is a very well-written and well-presented book, which was enjoyable to read. The authors have pulled together all the different guidelines available for infant feeding, thus making a good reference source, which can be used universally. The European approach that the book takes is a new angle, as it is useful to know how other

countries encompassed in this book are approaching this area of child nutrition. Also, the advice given for Eastern European countries could be applied for children from low socio-economic groups in other European countries.

Specifically, the authors have addressed the issue of complementary feeding and have written a good section on the practical recommendations for the introduction of complementary foods. However, one point we noticed was that the recommendations for the age of introduction of complementary foods are based on limited evidence-based research, which the authors have acknowledged in their introduction. As this issue is very topical, it is probable that future research may provide more robust evidence, and some recommendations may need to be revised. The recommendations for the introduction of complementary foods to low-birth-weight babies is not clear cut, and this is a further area where recommendations should be viewed with caution. National guidelines do not agree regarding the age when whole cow's milk should be given to the infant as a drink. For example, in the UK, it is advised that cow's milk should not be given as a drink before the age of 1 year, whereas, in this book the recommendation is 9 months.

We feel that this is a very important book, that fills a gap in the market, and we recommend it for any health care professional working in the area of child nutrition. It is very clearly written, so that even those who do not have a background in nutrition can use it. All bio-medical libraries should aim to have a copy. As for students, it might be too expensive to buy; however, if they were to buy one book on current issues in infant nutrition, we recommend that it should be this one.

Buthaina Al-Rasasi and Jane Morgan

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Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers. Birgitta Malmfors, Phil Garnsworthy and Michael Grossman. Nottingham: Nottingham University Press. 2000. £15. ISBN 1-897676-92-1

This book takes as its basic message that research does not contribute to knowledge unless its results are effectively communicated. This communication can take a variety of forms from the paper or review in a scientific journal through oral conference presentations, posters, articles in popular magazines and newspapers, to face-to-face discussions. The book's main readership will probably be doctoral students and young scientists starting out on a career in research, and for them it will provide a very valuable source of ideas and information on all these

aspects of scientific communication. That is not to say that established scientists could not benefit from reading it; we have all sat through abysmal lectures given by very famous men, but old dogs are not usually willing to devote time to learning new tricks.

The book is very good on how to do things such as writing theses and papers, preparing posters, giving oral presentations including the pros and cons of using modern computer displays as compared with the traditional slides or overheads, literature searching and referencing. It also has a valuable chapter on getting started in writing. The energy barrier associated with putting the first words on paper is a well-known phenomenon, and there is much useful advice on how to overcome it. The authors also stress the importance of starting to write at an early stage of the research process, rather than waiting until all the results are in before writing the paper. This message could have been reinforced in the chapter on getting a paper into print. Some of the reasons for rejection of a paper are listed, but not the one where a referee insists that one more experiment needs to be done, and this at a stage when the doctoral student has washed up his test tubes and departed for pastures new. There is also a good chapter on improving writing skills. This chapter, although somewhat brief, contains useful material on how to make writing easier to read, on style, punctuation and grammar. There is also a section on words that are often confused and what they really mean. The inclusion in the list of 'whether/weather/wether' perhaps reflects the animal science backgrounds of the authors! It might have been worthwhile to include also a list of common spelling mistakes; I should be delighted never to see 'seperate' in a student's paper again.

The final two chapters of the book are perhaps less successful than what comes before. The penultimate chapter is aimed more at the teacher than the student, and deals with training students in writing and presentation as a part of a wider range of study skills. It is too brief to be really useful and the Further Reading list does not refer to what is becoming an extensive literature on the topic. Indeed, the chapter adopts an almost apologetic tone for

suggesting that study and transferable skills should form a core part of the curriculum in a degree course, when what teachers really want to do is get on with the serious business of teaching their subject. This is not a view that has currency in my own university, where teaching of transferable skills is recognised as key to students' success. The authors are more positive about the need to train postgraduate students in communication skills. This view is now, of course, firmly adopted by the funding councils, and provision of suitable training programmes will doubtless become a condition for universities continuing to receive research studentships from those bodies. Research supervisors could do much worse than to adopt this book as the core text for the purpose. The final chapter, on reviewing papers and presentations, is an uneasy mixture dealing very briefly with both refereeing papers for publication and assessing students' work. Neither topic is developed sufficiently to be really useful. For example, a passing reference is made to peer assessment of presentations by students. This is an important and complex subject, and it is appropriate that attention is drawn to it, but the reader should expect to look elsewhere for a serious coverage of when and how to use it.

Apart from these reservations about the last two chapters the book can be strongly recommended as a guide on how to write and present research work effectively. Having said that it seems a bit churlish to criticise the book for what is missing, but a notable omission is that nothing is said about publishing on the Internet (except for a health warning about the quality of some of the material to be found there). Whatever one may think about the merits or problems of this form of publishing, it is going to increase if for no other reason than because of the increasing volume of research being done and the decreasing budgets that librarians have to buy new or bigger journals. I hope that if this book goes to a second edition it will contain a sizeable chapter on whether to, and how to, get one's message into hyperspace.

Shawn Doonan

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