

Foreword

A few years ago, a colleague from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was giving a half-day training session to a large group of health care professionals. The program detailed many aspects of quality immunization delivery—administering vaccines properly, using only true contraindications, avoiding missed opportunities, addressing parents’ concerns, and understanding all of the nuances of the child and adolescent immunization schedules. When the speaker began discussing the hepatitis B vaccine recommendations for low birth weight newborns, one seasoned physician stood up and said, “*That’s it. This is just too much. This is just too much to know!*”

While we are all happy that vaccines can protect our patients and loved ones from so many diseases, most of us probably share some of this physician’s sense of being overwhelmed. Vaccination is one of the most important actions we take to prevent illness in our patients and communities, but there is just *so* much to know to get it right!

I have dedicated most of my professional life to helping health care professionals “get it right,” that is, give the right patient the right vaccine, at the right time, in the right amount, and in the right way. Having founded and fostered one of the most relied-upon immunization education organizations in the United States, I have fielded many immunization questions and have developed a deep appreciation for the complexity of managing all the actions that go into a quality immunization program. That is why I am so enthusiastic about Dr. Marshall’s superb work, *The Vaccine Handbook: A Practical Guide for Clinicians*—more widely known as *The Purple Book*.

I invite you to explore and use this pocket-sized, “everything-you-ever-could-think-to-ask-about-vaccines” book in the following ways.

First, keep at least one copy in your office so your staff can find it when a question arises. Can’t remember which age group is at risk for meningococcal disease and needs to be vaccinated? Need to know who gets a second dose of influenza vaccine? Or who has a special health condition and should not receive varicella vaccine? Or what to do if you accidentally gave Tdap to a 15-month-old? *The Vaccine Handbook’s* Table of Contents tabs and the excellent indexing will help you find the answer.

In addition to using it as a quick reference, I urge you to look over the Table of Contents and explore the first section (*General Principles of Vaccinology and Vaccine Practice*) in depth. Sit down and start digging into it to see the wealth of information Dr. Marshall provides. Because, like you, I have to answer questions about vaccines, and I am thrilled to have this enormous amount

of practical information compiled into one small, easy-to-read and easy-to-comprehend book. *The Purple Book* offers extensive coverage of vaccine immunology, federal vaccine financing and policy, and how the safety of US vaccines is assured. It even teaches us about coding and billing for vaccines. Chapter 4 details the gamut of activities involved in administering vaccinations in practice, with emphasis on storage and handling, vaccination technique, reminder and recall, how to use standing orders, and much more.

Several of these chapters are “must reading” for everyone involved in vaccinating patients in a medical practice. Certainly everyone in the office—including the receptionists—would benefit from reading Chapter 7 (*Addressing Concerns About Vaccines*). This key chapter provides answers to more than a dozen commonly asked questions that vaccine-hesitant parents and patients might ask, such as “Can too many vaccines overload the immune system?” and “Isn’t natural immunity better than induced immunity?” and “Are alternative schedules a good idea?” During more than 20 years in the field of immunization education, I have not seen a book that is so brimming with state-of-the-science vaccine information. This book belongs in the hands of every medical student, physician-in-training, doctor, nursing student, and nurse who provides vaccines to patients, regardless of patient age or medical specialty.

EO Wilson, sociobiologist and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, wrote, “*The world henceforth will be run by synthesizers, people able to put together the right information at the right time, think critically about it, and make important choices wisely.*” This is precisely what *The Vaccine Handbook* is designed to do—*synthesize*. As you learn and internalize this information, I believe you will be awed by your ability to prevent diseases that previously ravaged humankind.

Deborah L. Wexler, MD
Executive Director
Immunization Action Coalition