

Book Review

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The Vaccine Handbook: A Practical Guide for Clinicians, 4th Edition. By Gary S. Marshall, MD, West Islip, NY: Professional Communications, Inc., 2012. 557 pp. \$24.95

Immunizations are one of the most effective public health measures for preventing infectious diseases. As the number of recommended vaccines has increased, the immunization schedule has become more challenging to follow. *The Vaccine Handbook: A Practical Guide for Clinicians* offers a comprehensive, up-to-date, and useful guide to understanding vaccines and is an easy-to-use reference for medical personnel who provide immunizations. This book, also known as, "The Purple Book," is a valuable resource for practitioners in need of information related to a particular vaccine, and it serves as an introductory text for those interested in the scientific basis of vaccine administration, safety, and efficacy. This book gives clinicians a well-organized and efficient one-stop source for information on immunizations and vaccine preventable diseases.

The Vaccine Handbook draws from a number of sources, principally the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. It is divided into two major sections: *General Principles of Vaccinology and Vaccine Practice* and *Diseases and Vaccines*. The first section, comprising 8 chapters, provides general background information that is useful for anyone involved in routine vaccine administration. This section provides a scientific introduction to vaccine immunology and details the infrastructure of the United States vaccine program; included are important subsections on adverse event reporting and requirements for school entry. The technical aspects of vaccine administration (storage, handling, etc.) and general rules for immunizations are also explained (eg, minimum ages for vaccines, timing between live vaccines). Infectious

Diseases specialists may find Chapter 6, "Vaccination in Special Circumstances," particularly helpful. This chapter gives both general and specific recommendations for vaccination of unique populations, such as immunocompromised individuals, which are often the focus of "curbside" ID consults and "quick questions." For anyone who routinely administers vaccines, Chapter 7 may be the most critical of the whole book: "Addressing Concerns About Vaccines." Dr Marshall does an excellent job describing the most commonly asked questions from vaccine-hesitant parents and offers scientific and rational responses for each. His clear and fact-based explanations can assist any practitioner who faces challenges from skeptical parents, such as "Does MMR cause Autism?" or "Can Multiple Vaccines Overload the Immune System?"

The second section of the book comprises 21 chapters dedicated to vaccine-preventable illnesses and available vaccines. Concise summaries of the pertinent features of individual vaccines are presented. Each chapter also describes the pathogen, the clinical disease, and its epidemiology. Tables provide manufacturing information, contents of the vaccine, doses, costs, and recommended schedules. Safety and efficacy information are described further in the text sections. Chapters are also included about adult (eg, zoster) and less frequently administered vaccines (eg, Japanese encephalitis, anthrax).

The fourth edition of Dr Marshall's book maintains many of the salient features published in past editions combined with the most recent recommendations and schedules, as of February 2012. Information in previous editions has been consolidated into tables and figures and the structure of the book has been refined to allow easier reference. The first section could be read as a textbook, and the individual vaccine

chapters serve as a desktop reference. This book is a nice addition to any primary care office or infectious disease division library.

The Vaccine Handbook is not yet available for any electronic media platform (eg, iPad, Kindle). For physicians using tablets and laptops in the office, it is a detriment for a quick reference to be inaccessible online. However, the print version is readily available through the publisher (pcibooks.com) as well as through other online sources.

Dr Marshall's book, *The Vaccine Handbook*, is a useful addition to any office that administers vaccines. It is an excellent collection of expert advice and provides easily accessible facts regarding immunizations. Written primarily for primary care clinicians, the book offers a wealth of information and could be used at any level of training from student through established infectious diseases consultant. It is a particularly important aid for those in need of guidance in answering questions from parents about vaccines.