

Book review

The Practice of Pediatric Orthopedics

Lynn Staheli (editor), 448 pages, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia 2001

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Modern textbooks in orthopedic surgery tend to focus on special fields even in the subspecialties and also to increase in size and the number of volumes. Consequently, they serve more or less as reference books since very few of us have the time and stamina to read them from the beginning to the end.

The Practice of Pediatric Orthopedics, edited by Lynn Staheli, breaks this trend. It is edited on the modern principles and will probably stand out as a landmark for future publications in this field, although it will not replace the comprehensive textbooks and their thorough analyses. In about 400 pages, it fully covers all aspects of pediatric orthopedics, from genetics, congenital malformations, infections, tumors, neuro-muscular disorders to trauma and sports injuries. Each chapter clearly and concisely surveys basic principles and is illustrated with numerous excellent clinical pictures, radiograms and schematic drawings. Much of the information is conveyed in these illustrations and without verbosity. Each chapter is followed by a short list of the most recent references, enough to open the special field for anyone interested.

The target groups for this book are orthopedic residents and general orthopedists and it will serve, not only as a source of knowledge, but probably also as an introduction and a source of inspiration to pediatric orthopedics. The book is also unique because it takes the child's and the parents' perspective. The focus is on the well-being of the child and there are excellent chapters on normal development and evidence-based advice not to treat, e.g., asymptomatic flexible flat feet with shoe inserts

or, even worse, surgery. The value of play in the healing process is also emphasized. The effect of modern phenomena such as obesity in children as well as organized sports and problems with parental involvement are discussed.

About 30 authors, all prominent pediatric orthopedic surgeons, most of them from the USA, have contributed and some suggestions about treatment reflect the North American therapy tradition. Bryant traction is the most commonly used method of treating femoral fractures in children below age 3 in the Nordic countries, but is advised against in the text because it is said to be associated with a high frequency of vascular compromise, unlike the Nordic experience. The suggested treatment programs reflect not only a difference between North American and Scandinavian treatment traditions, but also the vast experience of the authors, which makes it enjoyable to read this book, not only for the trainee but also for the experienced pediatric orthopedic surgeon. The latter also will undoubtedly enjoy the final chapters with excellent reviews of common syndromes in pediatric orthopedics and very well illustrated surveys of surgical procedures.

This book is as easy to read as an evening tabloid and surely the authors have reached their goal to make learning about children's orthopedics efficient and pleasant.

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