

Preface

Keeping all of the relevant information at your fingertips in a field as broad as pediatrics is both an important task and quite a lot to manage. Add to that the busy schedule most physicians and physicians-to-be carry of practice or studies, family life, and personal obligations, and it can be daunting. Whether you would like to keep your knowledge base up to date for your practice, are preparing for the general pediatric board examination or recertification, or are just doing your best to be well prepared for a ward rotation, *Practically Painless Pediatrics* can be a valuable asset.

Practically Painless Pediatrics brings together the information from several major pediatric board review study guides, and more review conferences than any one physician would ever have time to personally attend, for you to review at your own pace. It's important, especially if there isn't a lot of uninterrupted study time available, to find materials that make the study process as efficient and flexible as possible. What makes this book quite unusual among medical study guides is its design using "bite-sized" chunks of information that can be quickly read and processed. Most information is presented in a question-and-answer (Q & A) format that improves attention and focus and ultimately learning. Critically important for most in medicine, it also enhances the speed with which the information can be learned.

Because the majority of information is in question-and-answer (Q & A) format, it is also much easier to use the information in a few minutes of downtime at the hospital or the office. You don't need to get deeply into the material to understand what you are reading. Each question and answer is brief – not paragraphs long as is often the case in medical review books – which means that the material can be moved through rapidly, keeping the focus on the most critical information.

At the same time, the items have been written to ensure that they contain the necessary information. Very often, the information provided in review books raises as many questions as it answers. This interferes with the study process, because the learner either has to look up the additional information (time loss) or skip the information entirely – therefore not really understanding and learning it. This book keeps answers self-contained, meaning that any needed information is provided either directly in the answer or immediately following it – all without lengthy text.

To provide additional study options, questions and answers are arranged in a simple two-column design, so that it is possible to easily cover one side and quiz yourself or to use the book for quizzing in pairs or study groups.

For a few especially challenging topics, or for the occasional topic that is better presented in a regular text style, a text section has been provided. These sections precede the larger Q & A section for that topic (so, for example, pulmonology text sections will precede the Q & A section for pulmonology). It is important to note that when text sections are present, they are not intended as an overview or an introduction to the Q & A section. They are stand-alone topics found to be more usefully presented as clearly written and relatively brief text sections.

The materials utilized in *Practically Painless Pediatrics* were tested by residents and attendings preparing for the general pediatric board examination, or the recertification examination, to ensure that both the approach and content are on target. All content has also been reviewed by attending and specialist pediatricians to ensure the quality and understandability of the content.

If you are using these materials to prepare for an exam, this can be a great opportunity to thoroughly review some of the many areas involved in pediatric practice and to consolidate and refresh the knowledge developed through the years so far. *Practically Painless Pediatrics* is available to cover the breadth of the topics included in the General Pediatric Board Examination.

This book utilizes the knowledge gained about learning and memory processes over many years of research into cognitive processing. All of us involved in the process of creating it sincerely hope that you will find the study process a bit less onerous with this format and that it becomes at least a times an exciting adventure as you refresh or build your knowledge.

Brief Guidance Regarding the Use of the Book

Items which appear in **bold** indicate topics known to be frequent board examination content. On occasion, an item's content is known to be very specific to previous board questions. In that case, the item will have "popular exam item" beneath it.

At times, you will encounter a Q & A item that covers the same content as a previous item. These items are worded differently and often require you to process the information in a somewhat different way compared to the previous version. This variation in the way questions are asked, for particularly challenging or important content areas, is not an error or an oversight. It is simply a way to easily and automatically practice the information again. These occasional repeat items are designed to increase the probability that the reader will be able to retrieve the information when it is needed – regardless of how the vignette is presented on the exam or how the patient presents in a clinical setting.

Occasionally, a brand name for a medication or a piece of medical equipment is included in the materials. These are indicated with the trademark symbol (®) and are not meant to indicate an endorsement of or recommendation to use that brand name

product. Brand names are occasionally included only to make processing of the study items easier, when the brand name is significantly more recognizable to most physicians than the generic name would be.

The specific word choice used in the text may at times seem informal to the reader and occasionally a bit irreverent. Please rest assured that no disrespect is intended to anyone or any discipline, in any case. The mnemonics or the comments provided are only intended to make the material more memorable. The informal wording is often easier to process than the rather complex or unusual wording many of us in the medical field have become accustomed to. That is why rather straightforward wording is sometimes used, even though it may at first seem unsophisticated.

Similarly, visual space is provided on the page, so that the material is not closely crowded together. This improves the ease of using the material for self- or group quizzing and minimizes time potentially wasted identifying which answers belong to which questions.

The reader is encouraged to use the extra space surrounding items to make notes or add comments for himself or herself. Further, the Q & A format is particularly well suited to marking difficult or important items for further review and quizzing. If you are utilizing the book for exam preparation, please consider making a system in advance to indicate which items you'd like to return to, which items have already been repeatedly reviewed, and which items do not require further review. This not only makes the study process more efficient and less frustrating, but it can also offer a handy way to know which items are most important for last-minute review – frequently a very difficult “triage” task as the examination time approaches.

Finally, consider switching back and forth between topics under review to improve processing of new items. Trying to learn and remember many information items on similar topics is often more difficult than breaking the information into chunks by periodically switching to a different topic.

Ultimately, the most important aspect of learning the material needed for board and ward examinations is what we as physicians can bring to our patients – and the amazing gift that patients entrust to us in letting us take an active part in their health. With that focus in mind, the task at hand is not substantially different from what each examination candidate has already done in medical school and in patient care. Keeping that uppermost in our minds, board examination studying should be both a bit less anxiety provoking and a bit more palatable. Seize the opportunity, and happy studying to all!

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