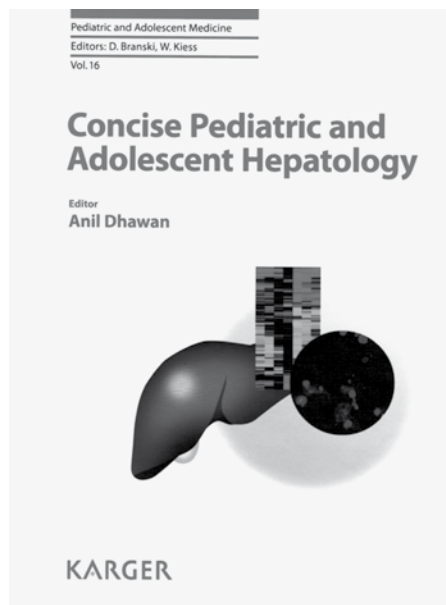


Concise Pediatric and Adolescent Hepatology

Anil Dhawan, Karger 2012, ISBN 978-3-8055-9829-3

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Pediatric hepatology has grown as a sub-speciality over the last three decades. As such it has become the object of several renowned textbooks. So what does Dhawan's recent volume bring to the table? It is remarkable for three salient features: 1) it is considerably more concise than its predecessors 2) it devotes one chapter to the psychological aspects of chronic liver disease in childhood and adolescence with special consideration given to compliance, in keeping with the Karger series title 'Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine' and 3) it reviews two areas often overlooked, namely non-viral infections of the liver and novel approaches to understanding and managing liver disease («Hepatocyte Transplantation, «Omics», and Gene Therapy in the Management of Liver Diseases»).

The Karger website states that the target audience of their «*Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*» series is «the general practitioner and the hospital physician». In general, Dhawan's volume meets that goal, although I would argue that the chapter on Progressive Familial Intrahepatic Cholestasis is more of a scholarly read and as such not as

adapted to the target audience desirous to improve their understanding of these rare diseases.

In order for a textbook to be a reliable and cited reference, it needs to be well written and to include useful diagrams; it requires the right balance of illustrations and text, and information should be easy to find (this usually means a thorough index). A leading reference needs to balance basic knowledge with state-of-the-art advances. Again, these criteria are largely fulfilled, with the rare exception cited above and the table on disease-specific investigations in acute liver failure which is not user-friendly (Chapter 2). In addition to the previously mentioned chapters, Dhawan invited recognized experts, mostly from Europe, in the field of pediatric hepatology to give an overview of the most important topics in the field including biliary atresia, Alagille Syndrome, Wilson's disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and steatohepatitis, viral hepatitis, extra-hepatic portal hypertension, hepatic malignancies, parenteral-nutrition-associated liver disease, and a very comprehensive overview of liver transplantation.

The obvious omission is the absence of a chapter devoted to liver-based metabolic diseases or inborn errors of metabolism, including α -1-antitrypsin deficiency among others. This is surprising as these rare diseases are increasingly recognized in childhood, often progressing to cirrhosis, and have become an important indication for pediatric liver transplantation. One can only assume that the reason for this exclusion is that Kruger is planning a dedicated issue in the Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine series.

Finally, for the generalist or resident in training, another useful topic might have been guidance regarding the management of extrahepatic complications of liver disease, in particular nutrition and hepatic encephalop-

athy. Indeed, specialized nutrition is the cornerstone of management in these patients with elevated metabolic demands. As for hepatic encephalopathy (HE), there is increasing awareness that cognitive problems in children with chronic liver disease may in fact be the hallmark of HE, something which was overlooked by the authors of the psychological chapter, whose focus is more the child with chronic disease rather than liver-specific complications.

All in all, *Concise Pediatric and Adolescent Hepatology* is a useful addition to a pediatric library for the generalist or trainee interested in or following patients with liver disease.

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