

BOOK REVIEWS

Be prepared for prenatal diagnosis

'Genetic Disorders and the Fetus – Diagnosis, Prevention, And Treatment', 7th edition
Edited by: Aubrey Milunsky and Jeff Milunsky
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As the previous editions, this is an incredibly useful volume. The editors have engaged multiple experts on specific topics, as well as provided the latest and most up-to-date information and discussions without leaving out broad topics, such as genetic counseling, medical/legal aspects, and ethical issues. Each chapter has useful figures and tables, including some lovely colored illustrations. Specific conditions are well covered, either by a chapter or under specific techniques. Non-invasive, prenatal screening using cell-free fetal DNA is well covered; however, the newer aspects of maternal physiology are not yet covered. The problem of fetal mosaicism is dealt with in many chapters, but not as an issue itself. A broad variety of fetal therapies, from infection to metabolic disease and structural abnormalities, are also covered as various topics and in two excellent chapters on medical therapy and fetal surgery.

Much has been learned about the molecular development of the placenta in the last decade. As the genetic pathways are luminated in the next decade, one can anticipate potential new therapies not yet imagined. Perhaps the most dramatic change since the last edition in 2010 is the wealth of molecular studies and the availability of whole genome sequencing for unusual situations.

The chapter on molecular genetics carefully outlines various considerations, the importance of reporting 'incidental' results, and how important epigenetics will be in the future. My only disappointment, because of a personal interest, is that fetal movement is not discussed. The importance of studying fetal movement for the diagnosis of arthrogryposis is not covered, nor is the observation of fetal behavior, which is a growing field of interest. Cross-referencing between chapters could also be helpful in the next edition.

In summary, this is a superb book, both a reference and a resource. It is clearly an essential book for anyone involved in prenatal diagnosis, and for those who want to learn more about it. It is hard to be critical of such a wonderful resource.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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'Absolute clarity' and how to achieve it

The Scientist's Guide to Writing—How to Write More Easily and Effectively throughout Your Scientific Career
Written by: Stephen B Heard
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This useful book is both a guide and a companion, with a key message—that the scientist has to write with 'absolute clarity'. The author tells you how to do this, and he should know as he is a successful scientist and Editor, and sees papers and publications from both sides of the fence!

The book is arranged logically into seven sections. First up are some philosophical thoughts on the history of scientific writing from medieval scholar loaners to enlightenment scientific sharing, for example, Bacon's Salomon's House and why Newton bothered to publish at all!

The second section is on behaviour and the psychology of (scientific) writing. Most people have to work hard to become successful writers and it is a craft the scientist will have to learn. To bring his message home Heard quotes from the horror writer Stephen King, 'What is writing? The answer is telepathy.' You want your reader to understand your writing as easily as you do. A great emphasis in this book is to always think of the reader, and that you yourself can learn to be a better writer by your own critical reading of others. For the writing process itself there is much good advice on avoidance (for example, of getting started), distractions, feeling stuck (and how to conquer writers block), the peril of perfectionism, and what to do if