

## Book Review

### *Pocket Medicines for Children 2001*

**Published by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in conjunction with the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group**

**£9.99 (UK)**

Since *Medicines for Children 1999 (MFC)* was first published it has been used as the primary reference source for children's doses in the hospital where I currently work. This has meant either carrying it around the wards, which is fairly awkward, or trying to find the ward's copy which is usually in use or missing. This can be very frustrating and time consuming.

When presented with the recently published *Pocket Medicines for Children 2001*, the most striking feature was its size and weight, which makes it easy to carry around. As suggested in the title it does actually fit in your pocket, which allows it to be with you when asked difficult queries either on the ward or in other areas of the hospital.

Of course, with this reduction in size much of the information contained in the 1999 version cannot be included. This includes the guidelines section, body surface area nomograms and other sections at the back including eye preparations and nutritional products. Only the most commonly used drugs are included, and only the information needed to establish a drug dose. However, the only drug commonly used in our hospital that I could not find in the new MFC was cyclizine, which is used routinely as part of our hospital post-operative nausea and vomiting protocol. Could cyclizine be included in the next edition or does no one else use it?

The glossary fully explains the symbols that are used in the monographs. Particularly useful are the symbols denoting whether a dose has to be reduced in either renal or hepatic disease, and the symbols denoting the licensing status of a drug. The licensing status is important because if at all possible a licensed drug should be used. For example, it can be immediately seen that ibuprofen has a restricted licence and the text

confirms that it is off label in children < 7kg and < 1 year of age. Knowing this information means a suitable alternative can be suggested, if available, or at least the prescriber can be made aware the drug is being used off label.

The layout of the drug monographs is the same as the 1999 MFC, organised into alphabetical order by drug names. The dosage and administration information is concise and easy to follow, with maximum daily dosages highlighted clearly. One criticism is that in the case of drugs, such as cefotaxime and aciclovir, there is additional information for increasing the dosage regimen in meningitis and herpes encephalitis respectively. This information is easily missed subsequently leading to under-dosing patients. Perhaps this could be highlighted more effectively in future editions.

Green boxes highlight important contraindications, administration issues and other warnings. However, a lot of the information regarding indications, side effects and safety in pregnancy is not included. In practice this information is not frequently used or urgently needed and therefore it seems sensible to include only the important administration advice and warnings.

In comparing this formulary with others of a similar nature, it has all the information available for safe prescribing in a concise and easy to read format, with no unnecessary information. The layout of the drug monographs with highlighted sections and the tabular format of the dosage regimens is a lot clearer than other such formularies.

In summary, the *Pocket MFC* definitely has a use for both doctors and pharmacists as a formulary

for finding and checking doses and for nursing staff when checking and administering drugs to children. Its size means that it can be carried around by individual health professionals for dose checking. However, its use is restricted by the number of drug monographs and the additional information that is not available in the *Pocket MFC*.

I would certainly recommend the *Pocket MFC* for all paediatric healthcare professionals as it is well

set out, user friendly and contains all the necessary information to prescribe, check and administer commonly used medications to paediatric patients.

Stuart Parkes  
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## Future Meetings

Date	Meeting	Venue
27 February 2002 <i>Contact: ros.waring@nottingham.ac.uk</i>	Pain in Children	Derby, UK
September 2002 UK <i>Contact: www.nppg.demon.co.uk</i>	NPPG Conference	Birmingham,
25-28 October 2002 Belgium <i>Contact: jean.paul.langhendries@skynet.be</i>	8th Congress of ESDP	Liege,
June 2003 <i>Contact: imti.choonara@nottingham.ac.uk</i>	Young investigators' workshop	Derby, UK