

PAEDIATRIC SURGERY: A COMPREHENSIVE TEXT FOR AFRICA

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FOREWORD

Paediatric surgery has come of age with the publication of this landmark textbook directed to the African continent. A comprehensive textbook of this nature is long overdue and undoubtedly will serve as a basic reference tome, practical manual, and stimulus for innovative research for generations to come. Most current textbooks are written with an emphasis on surgical conditions and remedies commonly encountered in the developed world. However, in many developing countries, the aetiology, incidence, pathogenesis, clinical manifestations, investigations, treatment, and outcomes for common diseases, as well as diseases endemic to these regions, are different. Hence the need for a textbook to look beyond current texts and address diseases in a more comprehensive way.

The development of paediatric surgery as a speciality in Africa is relatively recent. In many areas, it is still compromised by a lack of demographic information, infrastructure, and trained surgeons familiar with the special needs of children, as well as limited anaesthetic services and fiscal deficiencies. Life for children on the African continent is therefore not easy. It is a constant battle against poverty, parasitic and other infections and diseases, trauma, debilitating congenital and central nervous system abnormalities, and many other factors impairing their growth and development.

Many of the same surgical diseases seen in the developed world must be diagnosed and treated in Africa under substantially less favourable and often adverse circumstances. The morbidity and mortality rates remain unacceptably high, with wide disparities between countries as well as between urban and rural communities. It is in this setting that this textbook will make a valuable contribution toward expanding knowledge and achieving improved surgical outcomes for all children.

Authorship was wisely chosen: each chapter is written by an acknowledged international expert and an African counterpart who has extensive experience. This daunting task is an affirmation of the specific need to address the often neglected surgical diseases of the region and their special circumstances. This collaboration also recognises the important contributions made by surgeons from Africa. They have a breadth of knowledge and experience to help unlock the doors of ignorance and to contribute to setting a standard of quality care. Many of the authors have earned national and international professional distinction as surgeons, teachers, innovative researchers, and leaders.

People often question the relevance of surgery on a continent where so many other issues are a priority. The estimated accumulative risk for a child to have a condition requiring surgical input is 85% by the age of 15 years, making it a significant public health problem. Obstacles to improve paediatric surgical care include a general lack of interest in surgical conditions affecting children, its poorly defined role, and a lack of political commitment. Surgical training in Africa is also very variable and beset with multiple challenges, which further compound the already suboptimal standard of surgical care. Sick children therefore are found on the doorsteps of health care workers, but the only way they can get their rightful due is to have knowledgeable and skilled surgeons caring for them.

This textbook, as a rich source of information, will consequently contribute significantly to paediatric surgical education in Africa, combining home-grown knowledge on the care of children with surgical conditions. Although this book is directed to the needs of surgeons working in Africa, it may also be of great help to those treating children from Africa somewhere in the developed world. Diseases know no boundaries.

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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

We are very pleased to partner with the authors to publish this entirely new and important book: *Paediatric Surgery: A Comprehensive Text For Africa*. This is a major achievement resulting from the contributions of many individuals.

All of the authors contributed their time, experience, and expertise, and for busy clinicians, writing is done at great personal sacrifice. Only by knowing the importance of a project do physicians elect to allocate such time for new material. We acknowledge the special contribution of Dr. Emmanuel Ameh for initiating and coordinating the entire undertaking. Please review the list of the text's contributors and note their diversity and impressive credentials.

Our staff also made this publication a priority. Deborah Cughan organized the project and used her graphic skills to integrate the text and illustrations for publication as well as to design the cover. Sandy Rush edited and indexed the book at a reduced non-profit rate. Additionally, Dean Carlson, our manager and web-master, helped to facilitate all aspects of the project.

Friends of the Global HELP Organization covered the cost of producing this book. Expenses include editing, indexing, formatting, web-site management, CD-Rom Library duplication, and hardcopy printing. Scores of generous people made donations and the major contributors were Henry & Cindy Burgess, George Hamilton, Paul & Suzanne Merriman, and Lana & Lynn Staheli.

We plan to distribute this publication as widely as possible. Along with the printed version, the full text is available on low-cost CD-Roms and may be downloaded in PDF format from our web-site without charge or restrictions.

For any new editions of the publication, please visit our web-site at www.global-help.org.

Lynn Staheli, MD, 2011

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PREFACE

Paediatric surgery has become an established specialty in many parts of Africa and other developing countries. However, the surgical care of children continues to pose significant challenges in these settings, due partly to the enormous disparity between the large volume of patients and the few available paediatric surgical specialists. In addition, many patients present late, frequently with advanced diseases, and, unfortunately, available medical facilities are often suboptimal.

Although a number of good paediatric surgical textbooks are currently in use worldwide, few address the peculiar needs of surgeons in the developing world. Even though most aspects of paediatric surgical care are standard worldwide, in many cases, the approach, methods, and techniques described in Western textbooks may not be applicable to the African setting. Most existing textbooks are written by surgeons who assume a Western audience in their discussion of incidence rates, demographics, and socioeconomic aspects. Discussion of available treatment options and reference to "standard of care" assume a Western level of technology. Understandably, conditions common in Western countries are treated with greater emphasis while those commonly seen in Africa may not be discussed at all. This book presents a comprehensive overview of paediatric surgery that is most relevant to African children and their surgeons. When used along with the already available textbooks, it will provide a more balanced perspective to anyone interested in paediatric surgery in Africa.

The authors of this book are primarily reputable paediatric surgeons with vast experience working in Africa, but also include those from developed countries, whose contributions will add the expertise gained from experience in state-of-the-art facilities. It is hoped that this collaboration will provide the reader with a safe approach to surgical care of children under difficult situations as well as up-to-date information on various aspects of paediatric surgery.

Africa is currently experiencing a severe shortage of paediatric surgical specialists, and a significant proportion of surgery on African children is still performed by general surgeons. Therefore, this book is targeted at trainees in both paediatric surgery and general surgery in Africa and similar settings as well as practising surgeons. Undergraduate medical students, paediatricians, and other paediatric health care practitioners will also find this book a useful reference. The recent increase in the numbers of charitable medical missions from Western countries will continue to bring surgeons from developed countries to Africa. These much-needed doctors will find the book an essential accessory to their work in Africa. Ultimately, we hope the children of Africa will be the final beneficiaries.

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