Communication for biomedical scientists

Naik SR, Aggarwal R (Eds)
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Disseminating scientific information and findings from research studies is as important as conducting scientific research. Unfortunately, biomedical scientists receive hardly any formal training in the way information should be presented. The book entitled Communication for Biomedical scientists (Editors: SR Naik and Rakesh Aggarwal) aims to fulfil this void.

Several eminent scientists and authors have contributed articles to this book, which is a boon for a beginner. It covers a variety of topics that would be of great interest to scientists and professionals wishing to hone their communication skills. It is noteworthy that the book deals with the technicalities of several modes of communication: writing for scientific journals and books, oral and poster presentations at scientific meets and also communicating science to the lay public. It provides useful tips regarding how to plan these presentations, how to prepare for them and how to guard from common errors and mistakes while making these presentations. The authors have used lucid language for explaining the purpose of each heading in an original paper. It has given clear-cut guidelines for writing sections such as introduction, methods, results and discussion. Being experts in scientific communication, the authors have been able to gauge the needs of average scientists and have provided tips for improving their skills. To cite an example, the chapter on grammar and syntax gives a list of words and phrases that are better avoided and also guides the reader regarding the terms that should be used instead. The authors have also used this book for informing prospective authors about the processes of selection of a journal, peer review and the editorial process, and for sensitising them about issues such as copyright, conflict of interest and scientific fraud and misconduct. It is not easy for undergraduate and postgraduate students and practitioners of medicine and life sciences to get information about these important issues through their day-to-day reading.

The book uses “simple-to-read” and “easy-to-understand” language and shuns unnecessary jargon. Every chapter provides a list of articles as references. Although the presentation and formatting could have been better, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) should be complimented for supporting this effort and publishing this book, which should adorn the library shelves of all medical schools. Overall, the book is a “must read” for all students of medicine and for all others who participate or intend to participate in scientific research and wish to enhance their skills of presentation.

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Practical guidelines on fluid therapy

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The textbook “Practical Guidelines on Fluid Therapy” authored by Dr. Sanjay Pandya (consulting nephrologist) has satisfied the long-felt need of a comprehensive monograph on fluid therapy in adults and children. The book is handy, low-cost, user-friendly and authoritative. The use of a question and answer format has made the text appealing to physicians who are looking for a specific answer in a given clinical situation. The scattered medical literature on fluid and electrolyte therapy has been well compiled in one place by means of this book.

Each chapter begins with a table of contents, which allows the reader to go to the desired information readily, thus saving precious time. The text has been well supported by liberal use of flowcharts, tables, diagrams and figures. Various formulae for calculations have been provided and explained in a lucid language. The bibliography of about 30 references at the end of the textbook adds depth to the research done by the author while compiling the textbook.

The text has been aptly divided into 11 chapters, which describe the management of fluids and electrolyte imbalance in various medical and surgical disorders. The text begins with a chapter on basic physiology and ends with a chapter on prescribing fluid therapy. The inclusion of the composition of the various fluid preparations and electrolyte solutions available adds a good practical dimension to the textbook. All the important disorders of fluid balance and individual electrolyte imbalance are dealt with in the third chapter. Separate chapters on diabetes mellitus and renal disorders emphasize the importance of fluid and electrolyte management in these conditions. Acid-base disorders have been dealt with as well. Fluid therapy in children has been given due importance and is dealt with separately. The chapter on fluid therapy in children discusses the various forms of dehydration in children and intravenous and oral rehydration therapy. The index provided at the end of the book allows rapid search of the desired information.

The paper and printing quality of the book can be improved further. If the book is converted into a ‘Pocket-Book’ format, it will be easier for the resident medical officers to carry it around in their wards. The book would be an asset to libraries and would also serve as a useful desktop reference for undergraduate and postgraduate medical students, practitioners, physicians, nephrologists, endocrinologists and medical teachers.

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