The Obstetric Hematology Manual

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The editors of *The Obstetric Hematology Manual* aim to describe contemporary clinical management of this complex group of patients. They achieved their goal – the content is succinct yet comprehensive, relevant to those who practise in this area and to those who need a useful reference for unfamiliar and difficult problems. The editors are to be congratulated for publishing a textbook that is truly a 'manual'.

One of the strengths is the breadth of coverage, including haematological problems secondary to obstetric complications, and primary haematological conditions, genetic and malignant disorders relating to pregnancy. Each chapter endeavours to describe the incidence, pathogenesis and diagnosis, with an emphasis on management. There is appropriate acknowledgement when evidence is lacking and expert practice is being described instead. One weakness is a lack of references to document the source of the information, when evidence-based.

The first chapter on *Normal hematological changes during pregnancy and the puerperium* sets the scene. It is straightforward and has clinically relevant descriptions. The distinction between hypothesis and evidence is clear and the summary points are useful. Strong moves the reader to more complex issues on iron deficiency in the *Hematinic deficiencies* chapter, such as discussing the pros and cons of universal supplementation and reference to practice in developing countries. It could be improved by a discussion of the diagnostic approach, practical supply and cost of iron in the developing world, a major health burden worldwide.

Sickle cell disease and thalassaemia major in pregnancy are covered in detail. This is clinically useful in our local hospital settings because of the changes in migration and because the improved health status in this patient group is leading more of these women to contemplate pregnancy. The *Dilemmas* section is particularly relevant.

The *Red cell alloimmunization* is the highlight of the *Feto-maternal alloimmune syndromes* section. McEwan's enthusiastic tone is infectious! His eloquent and comprehensive description of the genotype unravels its complexity. Describing current research and anticipating possible progress in the 'future' section whets the appetite for upcoming advances. As a visual learner, I think a flowchart describing Anti-D prophylaxis would complement the text. The chapter on *Fetal/neonatal alloimmune thrombocytopenia* is slightly too detailed and less relevant to those outside a specialized unit dealing with this condition.

The *Myeloproliferative disorders* and the *Effects of chemoradiotherapy on fertility and pregnancy* chapters are especially pertinent to my practice where there is an increasing overlap between pregnancy and malignant conditions. Harrison and Robinson's description of myeloproliferative disorders in pregnancy is thoughtful and sensible, despite some speculation.

They provide a practical and experience-based management framework, despite the lack of evidence. The five case studies highlight useful issues and demonstrate their management strategies in practice. The *Effects of chemoradiotherapy on fertility and pregnancy* chapter provides a valuable review of the available literature which can guide discussions with patients about fertility. The difficult topic of managing patients with leukaemia and lymphoma in pregnancy is also covered.

The editors are wise to include a chapter on *Genetic counselling and pre-natal diagnosis in hemophilia*. Mumford walks through the steps involved in assessing and managing these patients. The chapter could have been broadened to discuss the different considerations in other inherited disorders, such as the haemoglobinopathies and inherited coagulation disorders. Preimplantation genetic diagnosis is described as a 'future technique', whereas it is a feasible, albeit expensive, option in Sydney.

The *Inherited disorders of primary hemostasis* chapter, like much of this book, is detailed yet accessible for non-haematologists. The chapter on *Prosthetic heart valves* is informative, but not didactic – equipping the clinician to make an informed decision. In *Management of anticoagulants at delivery*, Oppenheimer and Sharpe deliver a clear message – communicate, plan ahead, document, and involve senior and appropriate clinicians. This is a message relevant to most haematological problems in pregnancy, as they are often complex, rare and require varied expertise.

I would strongly recommend this book to a wide audience. There are only few areas for improvement: the hierarchy of the headings and subheadings is not always clear, there are some typographical errors and occasional inconsistent layout. Some text is poorly expressed and there are some discrepancies in drug doses and administration between the obstetric and anaesthetic chapters on the *Management of obstetric hemorrhage*. I was surprised that activation of the massive transfusion protocol isn't included in *Management of obstetric hemorrhage*. The *Antiphospholipid syndrome* is a complex area, and I felt this chapter failed to provide a structured management approach. In *Thrombophilia and pregnancy loss*, both viewpoints on its pathogenesis are summarized well – a very helpful chapter in view of the lack of clarity in the literature. The *Pre-eclampsia* chapter is the only chapter that is not a 'manual' type chapter, with too much detail in some areas but lacking a clear management strategy.

In summary, Pavord and Hunt have compiled an excellent textbook on the management of haematology problems in obstetrics. Compared with *Hematological Complications in Obstetrics, Pregnancy and Gynecology* by Bick *et al.*,¹ another recent text in this subspecialty, *The Obstetric Hematology Manual* is more evidence-based, concise, clear and practical. It is a worthwhile addition to the library, in a field which will only continue to grow.

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- 1 Kidson-Gerber G. *Hematological Complications in Obstetrics, Pregnancy and Gynecology*, Bick *et al.* Book Review. *Obstet Med* 2010;3:166–7; doi:10.1258/om.2010.100049