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International Journal of Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijporl



Book review

Pediatric Airway, Cry, Stridor, and Cough, J. Hirschberg, T. Szende, P.J. Koltai, A. Illenyi. Plural Publishing, San Diego, CA. ISBN-13: 978-1-59756-086-3.

“Pediatric Airway, Cry, Stridor and Cough” begins with the sound premise that it is important to recognize and understand “the abnormal sounds of a child’s airway” that are “a fundamental part of a clinician’s craft”. The authors of this book have collected what they describe as 500 pathologic sounds from nearly 50 different clinical conditions to create a taxonomy of sounds. They begin the book with a description of the acoustic characteristics of the physiologic normal cry and then moved towards characterization and interpretation of pathologic sound phenomena. In order to understand what is being heard, they review the salient aspects of medical acoustics and pediatric laryngology.

The book itself begins following an introduction with a description of the sound phenomena one hears with a cry, with stridor, or with cough. The next two chapters are mostly historical describing prior work on the subject of the pediatric cry, stridor, and cough, and focus on the clinical presentation of the patients who share these symptoms. Chapter five is fascinating and describes the methodology of studying the acoustic signals produced by these children and provides a clear and salient discussion of the basic principles of acoustics, methods of acoustic investigation, and sound spectrography. Chapter six reviews the most commonly occurring acoustic sound signals emanating from children affected with these disorders. This is followed by the seventh chapter which goes further to describe how the pathologic sounds that we hear may be specifically attributed to the type of disease or anatomic disorder that we see. Finally, in chapter eight there is discussion of the diagnostic value of the conventional examination methods and of acoustic analysis.

This book is clearly written and that is helpful as this is a challenging topic. Part of the challenge is that it combines two

fields, that of pediatric laryngology and that of acoustic science. To be successful the book needs to weave back and forth between these two disciplines and to show clearly and succinctly how the two intertwine. This book is successful in this attempt. The authors clearly have immense clinical experience to draw from and they punctuate this clinical experience with an impressive basic science knowledge as well. The authors have helped to impose focus and structure within various sections of this book by configuring “key point” boxes designed to highlight the importance of certain aspects of each chapter. This is most helpful. The authors also very clearly document the literature from which they are drawing their conclusions.

This book is well worth reading for any pediatric laryngologist who hears the sound of cry, stridor, or cough each and every day and would like to understand how this could be better characterized, studied and understood. One remains aware of the specific challenges of acoustic analysis alone in making a diagnosis when one reads this text, but one certainly understands the supporting data that this technology can offer.

Christopher Hartnick*,
Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Otolaryngology, 243 Charles Street, Boston, MA 02114, United States

*Tel.: +1 617 573 4206; fax: +1 617 573 6845
E-mail address: christopher_hartnick@meei.harvard.edu

15 December 2008

0165-5876/\$ – see front matter
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doi:[10.1016/j.ijporl.2008.12.027](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijporl.2008.12.027)