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This is the fourth volume of the series Practical Algorithms in Pediatrics. The previous volumes – *Practical Algorithms in Pediatric Endocrinology* (now in its 2nd edition), *Practical Algorithms in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology* and *Practical Algorithms in Pediatric Nephrology* – have become working tools for many general pediatricians and trainees in the respective pediatric subspecialties.

The term ‘algorithm’ is derived from the name of the ninth century Arabic mathematician Al'ghwismi, who also gave his name to ‘algebra’. His ‘algorismus’ indicated a step-by-step logical approach to mathematical problem-solving. In reading the final product, written by some of the finest pediatric gastroenterologists and nutritionists in the world and edited by my friend Dr. Ron Shaoul, it is obvious that the spirit of the algorismus has been utilized to its best.

*Practical Algorithms in Pediatric Gastroenterology* is meant as a pragmatic text to be used at the patient’s bedside. The experienced practitioner applies step-by-step logical problem-solving techniques for each patient individually. Decision trees prepared in advance have the disadvantage of unacquaintedness with the individual patient. Yet, for the physician who is less experienced with a given problem, a prepared algorithm provides a logical, concise, cost-effective approach prepared by a specialist who is experienced with the given problem. In the process of writing this book I served as the non-specialist lay reader. Thirty-five years after having completed my pediatric residency, I discovered that pediatric gastroenterology has become a sophisticated specialty with a solid scientific background of which I know so little. I would still refer my patients to a specialist with many of the diagnoses, symptoms and signs discussed here. But, with the help of this outstanding book, I would refer them after an educated initial workup, and would be better equipped to follow the specialist’s management.

*Ze’ev Hochberg, MD, PhD*

Series Editor
Introduction

The field of pediatric gastroenterology is rapidly expanding, and the approach to diagnosis and management of the various conditions is continuously changing. A better understanding of the pathogenesis of many gastrointestinal disorders has led to a more physiologic approach and the development of better diagnosis and treatment modalities. Pediatric gastroenterology is quite unique compared to adult gastroenterology. We are dealing with developmental disorders, some of which start in utero. The issue of growth and development is unique for pediatrics, and therefore the approach to the same disease condition may be different between adult and pediatric gastroenterologists. There is an increasing need from both trainees in pediatric gastroenterology and general pediatricians for simple, bedside algorithms. *Practical Algorithms in Pediatric Gastroenterology* is meant to be a pragmatic text which classifies common clinical symptoms, signs, laboratory abnormalities and issues of management as presented in daily practice. I am honored that many of the algorithms in this book have been written by the leading experts in the area of pediatric gastroenterology and the surrounding fields. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who agreed to take part in this book and contributed their priceless experience. It has been my privilege as well as a very enriching and gratifying experience to interact and work with everybody. I would like to thank the series editor Professor Hochberg for his guidance and support and am especially grateful to Freddy Brian from Karger Publishers for his patience and his understanding in this long process.

Ron Shaoul, MD

I would like to thank my family, my wife Ety and my children Dolev and Shaked for their continuous understanding and support.