Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine

Vol. 21

Series Editor

Wieland Kiess    Leipzig
Pediatric Epidemiology

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21 figures, 7 in color, and 23 tables, 2018
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Introduction

Paediatric epidemiology deals with issues related to children’s and adolescents’ health, diseases that occur at an early age, and socio demographics and relations between children’s health and various environmental conditions. Paediatric epidemiology combines paediatrics and epidemiology, epidemiology in paediatrics, and paediatrics analyzed by using epidemiological methods. The editors of this volume are grateful to the publisher – in particular to Dr. Thomas Karger and Gabriella Karger, Basel – for making the publication of this rare book possible and for having supported the concepts of paediatric and adolescent health in general over the years. Currently, there are not many books dealing with the special aspects of epidemiology in the paediatric population. Yet, ethical, developmental and societal aspects of paediatric epidemiology differ quite substantially from those in general epidemiology dealing with research in the adult population. It therefore does not come as a surprise that a chapter in this book deals with ethical issues in paediatric epidemiology, another one explores biology at a young age in relation to body surface, water content, relative fat mass and age-specific behaviors, while yet another part of the book deals with the dilemma faced in light of incidental findings in children’s cohort studies. Classical topics of epidemiology such as how to recruit representative samples, how to deal with confounding variables, and how to deal with genetic information are the core areas of the book. It is mandatory to devote some thought to the fact that quite often in paediatric epidemiology one collects data from a representative(s) of the individual (child) rather than from him/herself. Detection of abuse in paediatric epidemiological cohorts not only poses ethical dilemmas but also elicits legal responses. Legal and ethical aspects are also to be taken into account when one is to carry out epidemiological studies and research on cohorts in low-income countries. Last but not the least, this volume undoubtedly will add to our understanding of global trends in children’s health and health issues.

The editors feel privileged to have been able to work with outstanding and well-known authors from around the world who have truly done a remarkable job to deliver their chapters meticulously and contribute generously in an exemplary manner to the book. We wish the volume success and believe that it will encourage the conduct of further research in the field of child and adolescent health, most importantly
by raising interest and creating awareness in the causes, prevalence and trends of frequently occurring civilization diseases. It is our sincere hope that this book will not only serve as a textbook for paediatric epidemiology but also as a key reference for those embarking on paediatric cohort studies and epidemiological studies involving the pediatric population.

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