Review: “Illustrated Field Guide to Adult Congenital Heart Disease”

By James C. Perry, MD

As the authors acknowledge in the preface to the “Illustrated Field Guide,” the number of adult congenital heart patients now is greater than those under 18 years of age. This has been the case for more than a decade in the US, making it increasingly likely that these patients will seek care in settings where providers will not have the requisite training or background in adult congenital heart disease (CHD) to recognize and manage the patients’ needs. The guidebook from Drs. Lim, Battle and Everett therefore fills an important niche in medical literature.

In recent years, advances have been made in advocacy for the adult CHD population, in attempts to garner health insurance coverage guarantees, reduce the risk of being denied coverage for their “preexisting condition” and increase the chance that research funding will be made available on a national level to understand who these patients are and how do they fare over the long haul. Much of this work has been performed by the Adult Congenital Heart Association (ACHA) www.achaheart.org in conjunction with professional organizations. Additional efforts are being made to insure that verifiable adult CHD programs exist throughout the US to provide global adult CHD care and importantly, training for future adult CHD cardiologists to care for this growing population. In the meantime, the patients are here already and need wise, coordinated care, often on an urgent basis. The Field Guide recognizes that there is a deficit of qualified, trained individuals who are available to see these patients, have the knowledge to care for their current needs, and the ability to anticipate their future needs as well.

The “Field Guide” is not intended as a “How To” manual or a substitute for training in managing patients with adult CHD. However, each section of the guide clearly reviews the salient features of each defect:

(a) anatomy and physiology,
(b) evaluation,
(c) medical and surgical management and
(d) important problems in adult survivors with CHD.

The color illustrations are especially helpful for those with minimal exposure to CHD concepts, including diagrams, echocardiographic snapshots and angiograms. The book is available in a small pocket-size and larger desktop version, has a waterproof cover and a ring binder allowing it to easily lay open for viewing.

The Field Guide focuses on the most common CHD lesions the practitioner is likely to encounter, including a section on single ventricle physiology conditions. This section covers Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, tricuspid atresia and other less common CHD lesions. In addition to CHD, the Guide offers sections on adults who had Kawasaki Disease as children (often an overlooked cause of adult angina symptoms), Marfan Syndrome and Eisenmenger Syndrome.

Drs. Lim, Battle and Everett have done an outstanding job putting together a “rapid resource and reference.”

The audience therefore includes trainees, nursing staff, advanced practice nurses, technologists as well as cardiologists. The Guide can serve as a quick reference for pediatric and adult cardiology trainees at the onset of their training in adult CHD. The care of the adult with CHD would benefit from emergency rooms and urgent care providers in particular having on hand a copy of this helpful reference, as well as those who encounter these patients in inpatient settings.

Illustrated Field Guide to ADULT CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

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Robert W. Battle, MD
Allen D. Everett, MD

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The book that will change the way you look at adult congenital heart disease.


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