Essentials of Surgical Pediatric Pathology
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Edited by

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Foreword

Essentials of Surgical Pathology has been written for general pathologists who occasionally encounter pediatric cases in the course of their mainly “adult” work, and for pediatric pathologists in training.

Babies and children are not “small” adults. The incidence, rarity, and peculiarity of many diseases and conditions are such that they justify the need for a different subspecialty. However, the practice of pediatric pathology is not always carried out in specialist centers where experts in this discipline are available. This is true in many countries around the world where there are few exclusively pediatric hospitals. Referral centers may be far away and it is not always possible to send these cases for second opinion.

Essentials in Surgical Pathology is designed and written as a practical bench-book, where experts in the relevant field write each chapter.

The book is organized by systems, except for individual chapters dedicated to typical pediatric tumors. Children’s tumors are rare. They are of different types and have different morphological features from adults. The book includes a chapter those in dedicated to small round blue cell tumors, which are almost always found in children and only occasionally in adults. Soft tissue tumors, another difficult area in pediatric pathology, has its own chapter. The chapter dealing with skin pathology, a subject deserving a whole book, prioritizes skin diseases found in children, many of which have a genetic component. This is true of all the systemic chapters where the authors concentrate on predominantly pediatric diseases.

The authors aim to describe the most common and important conditions found in pediatric patients. The book does not pretend to have in-depth understanding of each condition. A very complete list of references may guide interested pathologists.

We are grateful to our colleagues and friends who agreed to co-author the chapters that constitute Essentials in Surgical Pathology. We are indebted to them for their skillful contribution, thoughtful advice and enduring patience, which helped us shape the book that we initially envisioned two-and-a-half years ago. Pediatric and fetal autopsies have been covered in the companion book The Pediatric and Perinatal Autopsy Manual.

Marta Cohen dedicates this book to her parents, Elsa and Ramon Cohen, who as pediatricians nurtured and encouraged her love for pediatric medicine. She also dedicates the book to Roc Kaschula, her mentor during her time as a young trainee in Cape Town, South Africa, whose inspiration, careful guidance, and continuous friendship have influenced all her accomplishments.

Irene Scheimberg dedicates this book to her wonderful parents Rosa and Augusto, excellent clinicians in their own fields, and to Fernando Paradinas, whose knowledge and love of pathology inspired her to pursue this exciting career path.

Sincere thanks are due to our families: our spouses and children, who provided the necessary emotional support while being deprived of invaluable family-time during week-ends and holidays.
Preface

Of all the subspecialties into which the discipline of pathology has been segmented, some with better justification than others, one of the most distinct is that of pediatric and developmental pathology (PDP), especially the latter. To begin with, a perinatal autopsy in this field requires knowledge of two “specimens” (the placenta and the fetus/neonate), plus the connector that joins them. In the case of surgical specimens, one needs to always be mindful of the ever-changing features of the growing tissues as they undergo development. Secondly, it calls for expertise in matters which are usually of generally less import in adult pathology, such as embryology, physiology, cytogenetics, and special branches of bacteriology.

Most importantly, an autopsy in PDP has, more often than not, a greater clinical relevance than its adult counterpart, as attested by the genuine interest of pediatricians and obstetricians in the autopsy findings and the high percentage of such autopsies that are carried out in general hospitals. Whereas the number of adult autopsies keeps decreasing despite the constant pleas of pathologists, no such solicitation is needed from their PDP counterparts.

The special standing that PDP has in the wide field of pathology is also borne out by disorders exclusive of this specialty, such as rare cancers, early pregnancy loss, intrauterine growth restriction, hydrops fetalis, and twin pregnancies.

Equally unique is the area of placental pathology, which in expert hands can provide a wealth of clinicopathologic correlations and morphologic clues to specific inflammatory condition in the infant.

Another area in which PDP reigns supreme is that of the congenital anomalies and metabolic disorders. Yet another, perhaps the most difficult to master, is that of congenital heart defects and associated syndromes. I will never forget watching, as a first-year resident, a perinatal autopsy demonstration by an expert in congenital heart disease, and how the intricated physiopathology of that particular cardiopathy came alive by the master rotating the specimen, inserting fingers, and pointing to bundles of hypertrophic muscle, holes that should not be there, and missing components of the organ. Which reminds me of the comment made by a famous pathologist to the effect that the expert in pathology is not necessarily the one who finds extraneous tissues, but the one who notices the absence of an important piece of the anatomy.

And what about the enigmatic infant sudden death syndrome? Isn’t PDP the best team equipped to elucidate once and for all the pathogenesis of this disastrous event?

This wealth of opportunities is skillfully covered in this attractive book by Dr. Marta Cohen and Irene Scheimberg, two UK-based PDP of Argentinian background, a fact worth mentioning because of the great tradition of excellence in PDP in that country, exemplified by representatives of the caliber of Luis Becú, Roberto Gallo, and Ricardo Drut. The editors have garnered a cadre of experts in pediatric surgical pathology, covering the most salient points of the wide spectrum of pediatric and developmental surgical pathology. This volume is complementary to Pediatric and Developmental Postmortem Pathology, also edited by Drs. Cohen and Scheimberg.

Overall, this clearly written and well-organized book should be an ideal introduction to the field of pediatric and developmental surgical pathology for general pathologists, and perhaps induce some of them to consider becoming members of this outstanding league of specialists. If they do, they will not be disappointed.

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