

SLMA Guidelines and Information on Vaccines

Eighth edition 2023, 496 pages

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As we all know immunization has become an integral part of our life. Sri Lanka has a success story to tell the world on immunization and control of vaccine preventable diseases. Advances in science introduced new vaccines and vaccine schedules were improved to optimize delivery and achieve the best return on investment. Undoubtedly the series of SLMA publications on vaccines provided an updated information and empowered the medical fraternity of Sri Lanka, with 7 editions spanning little over two decades. Earlier the main interest groups of vaccines were the clinicians who looked after children, pregnant women, microbiologists, and immunologist. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a paradigm shift in vaccine development, demand, distribution, and deployment all over the world. The newest publication in the SLMA series on vaccines, 'SLMA GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION ON VACCINES', 8th edition, is compiled by 30 able experts in the field, and meticulously edited by 5 eminent personal lead by Dr Lucian Jayasuriya.

The content of the book spreads over 40 chapters with the inclusion of three new chapters, namely on COVID-19, Emerging Illness, and Vaccine Hesitancy. The chapters are arranged in a logical sequence helping the reader to get well oriented and understand the concepts and facts. A uniform format shared across the chapters that discuss about individual vaccines helps the reader to browse through easily. Meticulously page setting and use of simple language has made it reader friendly.

The first chapter gives a beautiful overview on vaccine evolution in the world which is useful to the historians and interested school children and undergraduate students. It gives the reader a different perspective of the book.

Chapter two gives a comprehensive but brief outline of the function of the immune system which is helpful to recapitulate the basics of immune function, and its

relevance to the development and action of immunity. It provides a good working knowledge, and the comprehensive listing of the references provide good opportunity to gather more advanced up to date information to the reader.

Basic knowledge required and some common practical issues faced in day-to-day immunization are discussed in the third and thirty eighth chapters, which is quite useful specially for the beginners in the field. I wish that the publication included the impact of antimicrobial therapy on BCG vaccination as well as provided a cross reference to the effects of prednisolone on vaccination. Chapters on how to manage anaphylaxis and reporting adverse events during immunization, although rare, are very important for both patient safety and sustenance of the immunization programme.

Chapters 4 to 25 provide information on specific vaccines, and the information provided does not confine to the respective vaccine but also a concise summary about the microbiology, disease entity and possible clinical outcomes of the illness as well as latency/effect on fetus/ etc. The content is expanded by including two new chapters. One is on COVID-19 and the other is on emerging diseases namely Ebola, Zoster, Mpox and Malaria.

The publication has taken a life course approach to vaccination inclusive of all ages and stages of life. The pandemic brought a new dimension to vaccination in Sri Lanka. Faced with an aging population as well as increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases, vaccinations beyond childhood and pregnancy has gained importance and interest. Vaccination would be a major way in preventing morbidity in these groups of population as well as bringing monetary savings to the health sector. Advances in medical field has improved survival rates in children with immunodeficient states. Further immune compromised states occur due to transplantation, use of immune modulators in diseases treatment or specific

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disease states. All of them require special protection, and this publication provides the caring physicians the required information in an easy referencing manner.

Vaccinating during different situations are important. Sports is an important part of the life of a youth. Sports have become so competitive, not only at national or international level but also at school level. Further it has bread into a profession where an athlete cannot afford to miss out training or an event due to a vaccine preventable disease. This book has created awareness and empowered the caring physician on this. Editors have addressed vaccination during disasters thus ensuring continuity of vaccination as well as preventing outbreaks of illnesses, which is sometimes missed amidst the chaos.

A timely inclusion is the chapter on vaccine hesitancy. After four decades of successful implementation and augmentation of the vaccine programme in Sri Lanka, over last few years subtle hesitancy has developed among certain groups of the population scattered all over the country. Inclusion of this chapter in this edition is a timely step taken, which empowers local medical fraternity on

this emerging issue before it is too late, which is undoubtedly contributing to the spread of measles in the country at this moment of time.

As someone who had used this book almost from its first publication pleased to see the heights it has grown to date. Although it is slightly bulkier, with closer to five hundred pages, the A5 format has made it easy to handle. Its highly recommended to be placed on the desk of a practicing clinician as a handbook on vaccination. In an era where most of the material are available on palm held devices, I hope the editors and the publisher would take this to the next level, a web based interactive publication. That would make it more user friendly, easily accessible, and a solution to its bulkiness and exorbitant printing cost.

Once again while congratulating Dr Lucian Jayasuriya lead team of experts, for making a comprehensive easy to read publication, I wish all success in updating and upgrading the publication with time.

Author declares no competing interests.