Preface

Welcome to the MassGeneral Hospital for Children Handbook of Pediatric Global Health. This Handbook is intended for the ever-increasing number of health professionals who are becoming involved in global health and spending a few weeks to months or even years providing medical care in resource-poor countries. Clinicians trained in the United States, Europe, Australia, and other resource-rich countries may take for granted ready access to tools for diagnosing and treating illness. Insufficient diagnostic services, treatment options, and health care infrastructure in resource-limited settings may prove challenging. This Handbook provides practical, evidence-based, hands-on guidance for managing and preventing childhood illnesses when resources are limited. It is not meant solely for pediatricians; it is designed for generalists, specialists, doctors, nurses, other health care workers, and those in training. The reality in many resource-limited settings is that the majority of the patients needing care will be young infants and children. Therefore, all providers need to be prepared to provide quality, evidence-based, compassionate pediatric care. The Handbook may also be a useful addition and resource for academic centers and universities in developed countries that are creating courses for trainees who will do clinical electives abroad during their training.

A focus on prevention and treatment of childhood illness for everyone providing care in developing countries remains highly relevant today. The United Nations’ Millennium Development Goal 4 is to reduce the under-age-five mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. We are quickly approaching this target date. Overall there has been some progress: several countries in South America and China will achieve the 2015 goal. However, progress has been slower than desired in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia: they are not projected to reach the 2015 goal until after 2040. In 2013, nearly seven million children under age five will die, and almost half will be neonates (less than 1 month old), and the most common causes of death in those greater than 2 months of age will be pneumonia and diarrhea.

This Handbook provides setting-specific understanding and management approaches to the major causes of childhood mortality, including pneumonia, diarrhea, birth asphyxia, complications of preterm birth, and neonatal sepsis.
The first part of the *Handbook* provides an overview of childhood mortality, health systems, and the various stakeholders that play a role in the global health arena. The *Handbook* also contains chapters on adolescent health, which is increasingly recognized as important as focus shifts towards health preconception in order to improve health of neonates and young infants. Also targeting the unique health concerns of this age group will maintain gains made in childhood and help prevent the onset of adult illnesses. Finally, key topics in non-communicable diseases are covered, including trauma and injuries, pediatric mental health, child and adolescent rights, and oral health.

The *Handbook* is a collaborative effort of residents, fellows, and faculty from MassGeneral Hospital for Children, paired with internationally recognized content experts from all over the globe. The *Handbook* focuses on the equipment, laboratory resources, and medicines that are likely to be available in developing settings and deliberately does not include options that are not typically available. It provides practical, field-based suggestions for utilizing local resources for optimal clinical care.

For many of the authors, working in developing countries during both short- and long-term assignments has changed their lives and career goals. Global health providers will experience exhilarating moments when a baby’s life is saved, as well as tragedies when simple, cheap, life-saving equipment or medicines are just not available. The goal of global health experiences is to help serve communities around the world. They also provide an opportunity for us to learn from our overseas colleagues and are a tremendous way to expand our own clinical understanding. Our hope is that respect for cultural issues, gratitude towards the people and providers from whom we learn, as well as the knowledge we bring will help all of us become competent and compassionate global health providers. This is the essence of the *Handbook*.

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