

Preface

International Adoption: Medical and Developmental Issues



Lisa Albers, MD, MPH Elizabeth D. Barnett, MD Jerri Ann Jenista, MD Dana E. Johnson, MD, PhD
Guest Editors

For more than a decade, international adoption has been increasing worldwide, with 22,884 children born abroad adopted by United States citizens in 2004. The experiences of children with a history of international adoption may be widely disparate. For example, for 50 years, families have welcomed children from orphanages or foster families in Korea into their homes and their hearts while children born in the former Soviet Union or China, residing primarily in child welfare institutions, have been joining families for only a decade. Although the children of international adoption may share some similar experiences with domestically adopted children or with immigrant or refugee children, their situation from birth to adulthood is unique from a myriad of medical, developmental and behavioral perspectives. These children often join their families after experiencing significant malnutrition, neglect and deprivation while residing in child welfare institutions. Infectious diseases and prenatal substance exposures may also negatively impact their growth and development as well. While most children thrive after joining their families, a substantial minority may continue to have chronic medical, developmental or behavioral concerns.

As discussed by Johnson, children are internationally adopted within a complex array of political and familial factors—yet appreciating any individ-

ual child's trajectory of growth and development within the context of their new family is critical to optimizing any individual child's long-term potential. While pediatric health care providers work with families and children before, during, or after international adoption, little information is provided during medical or nursing school, pediatric residency, or other graduate school training programs to prepare clinicians for this unique yet gratifying experience.

This volume aims to provide primary care and specialty providers with a framework for addressing the needs of internationally adopted children and their families from before adoption into adulthood. Progressing from pre-adoption consultation to identity development, we review evidence from the literature where possible and describe current clinical standards of care where available.

Articles by Chambers, Barnett, and Chen review considerations for providers when they review preadoption records, help families prepare to travel and meet their new family members and perhaps provide long-distance consultation to families while abroad. Davies and Bledsoe review implications of prenatal substance exposure worldwide, as the demographics of maternal substance use vary widely across countries but may carry long-term implications for families. Miller, Schulte, and Springer review immediate medical, developmental, and behavioral concerns that providers may need to address relatively shortly after children join their families.

While families may be most focused on medical issues before their child's adoption, chronic medical, developmental, or behavioral needs may emerge in the months to years following adoption. The articles by Mason, Weitzman and Albers discuss long-term growth and puberty concerns as well as developmental challenges children and their families may face. Dole, Nalven, and Costello discuss practical strategies for supporting families as they deal with school systems and access mainstream and complementary and or alternative developmental services to support their children's long-term development. Jenista reviews unique considerations for nontraditional adoptive families. Articles by Cox, Lieberthal, and Eckerle Kang review implications of international adoption on any individual's ultimate identity development, including the implications of international adoption for later search for and reunion with their birth families for families who become multiracial through adoption. An annotated bibliography also suggests readings specifically geared to professionals, parents, and children.

Lisa Albers, MD, MPH
Developmental Medicine Center, Pediatrics
Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School
Adoption Program
300 Longwood Avenue, Fegan 10
Boston, MA 02118, USA
E-mail address: lisa.albers@childrens.harvard.edu

Elizabeth D. Barnett, MD
Section of Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Boston University Medical Center
Maxwell Finland Laboratory for Infectious Diseases
774 Albany Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02118, USA
E-mail address: ebarnett@bu.edu

Jerri Ann Jenista, MD
Adoption Medicine
551 Second Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48103, USA
E-mail address: jjenista@aol.com

Dana E. Johnson, MD, PhD
Division of Neonatology
International Adoption Clinic
University of Minnesota
MMC 211, 420 Delaware Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA
E-mail address: johns008@umn.edu