The “Handbook for Clinician Scientists,” edited by Dr. Robert Bortolussi with contributors from a variety of fields, is a recently released useful tool for the aspiring Clinician-Investigator trainee. It can also serve as a useful refresher for more established investigators looking to take on new dimensions in their research. Topics are sorted into four general categories or skill sets that will typically be required of a young clinician investigator at some point in their career.

The “Ethics & Integrity” section addresses the basics of research ethics, conflicts of interest, an introduction to how ethics are formally regulated, as well as the ethics of research on children or similarly semi-autonomous research subjects. One chapter is devoted to the ethical considerations of working with different ethnic/cultural/religious groups; an important consideration in today’s increasingly diverse society.

“The Essential Toolkit” section delves into the more technical aspects of setting up a research program. A chapter is devoted to each of quantitative and qualitative research design, as well as a chapter on the basics of modern molecular biology techniques. “Good Clinical Practice” (GCP 101) is covered, as well as a chapter on Commercialization. The closing chapter deals with the long- and short-term considerations in setting up one’s own research program.

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“Person to person”, the third section, covers the more subtle social aspects of an early clinician-investigator’s career. “How to seek an academic appointment” and the importance of mentorship are first addressed. Others chapters are devoted to hiring and collaboration practices, and the topic of time management: something so basic but so vital in a clinician-investigator’s early career.

The final general section, “Communication”, is all about the presentation of one’s work. A first chapter of tips on making a presentation may seem self-evident, but has many suggestions that bear repeating. The chapter on “writing a manuscript” will prove very useful for trainees with a limited publication record or for investigators just entering the field. “Writing a Research Grant” will be something that is all-too-familiar to some, and entirely new to others. Again, the tips presented here bear some repeating even to the well-versed. The final chapters on policy research and knowledge translation deal with how to communicate one’s work to the general public to influence tangible change.

Overall, the Handbook touches on a wide range of topics highly relevant to the young clinician-investigator, whether their research is based in basic-science or epidemiology. Thus, while most readers may find one or two chapters overly simplistic (e.g. the “basic biology” chapter in my own case), most chapters will serve as a very useful introduction to an unfamiliar or less comfortable area of knowledge. All chapters are written as a very basic introduction, and all provide references to direct the reader for more in-
depth knowledge. The “Pearls of Wisdom” I found in one chapter came to mind one day as I found myself at an impasse with some data. Another useful feature is the “Key Points” box at the end of each chapter, which very effectively outlines the main “take-home” message of the chapter without simply parroting what has already been said. Some chapters are useful now; some will be in the near future. I can see myself coming back to this text again in both the near and distant future.