**Juvenile Health Fiction Review Checklist**

**By Maria C Tan and Sandy Campbell**

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**Screening criteria**

**The book is:**

* health-related - broadly defined, including physical, psychological, psychosocial conditions (being bullied), health behaviours, health care (e.g., visiting the dentist or doctor), learning about body parts, etc.
* a fictional work
* aimed at children pre-K to grade 6 (12 years of age) (particularly in contrast with being aimed at parents or health professionals - so not books meant primarily as teaching tools)
* in English
* Published or reprinted from 2011- onward. (Exception: an older publication that is still available and covers a topic not well-covered by more recent titles)
* appropriate format for libraries (eg: not a workbook)

**Content review criteria**

1. Medically accepted and scientifically accurate – gives reasonable advice, does not include gross inaccuracies (eg: shows a pregnant turtle - most kids know that turtles lay eggs; if you are depressed, hide under a rock and you’ll feel better).
2. Helpful to a child in a situation related to health. A child would:
   * see themselves and their situation reflected in the work
   * be helped to understand or empathize with the situation of another child or adult affected by the condition,
   * be able to vicariously experience the life of someone who is coping with a disease or disorder
3. Presents the situation in a positive light – the reader would be reassured by the work
4. Specific criteria for rejection:
   * Resolution is oversimplified (eg: child who doesn’t like a food spontaneously and inexplicably decides to try it and suddenly likes it)

minimizes the condition - “just stop feeling that way and you’ll be better”

* + Concepts in a picture book are too abstract for a small child to understand
  + Contains concepts presented in a frightening way (eg: the dentist is scary)
  + Presents normal states (pregnancy, gender differences, teen angst, etc) as illnesses
  + Presents bad behaviour as an illness, rather than just bad behaviour
  + Shows children being treated badly (eg: being tied up to be taken to the hospital)
  + Addresses only a narrow population of children (eg: only first-born, a particular religious group)
  + Introduces strange concepts (eg: people turn into red birds when they die, choosing food by colour - for no explicit reason)
  + Isn’t about the health condition, although the title would lead you to believe that it is (eg: story is about a child who has a sick sibling, but the sibling is in hospital and the story has little to do with the ill child)

This list accompanies: Tan, MC, and Campbell, S. [Connecting with Health Through Children’s Literature](http://chla-absc.ca/conference/sessions/1-connecting-health-through-children%E2%80%99s-literature). Paper presented at: Canadian Health Libraries Association (ABSC-CHLA) Conference; 2014 Jun 16-20; Montreal, Canada.

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