

Book Reviews

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Book Review Editor

Publishers who wish to submit books for possible inclusion in Family Medicine's book review section should send texts to Jo Ann Rosenfeld, MD, Family Medicine book review editor, Franklin Square Hospital, Department of Family Practice, 9101 Franklin Square Drive, Suite 205, Baltimore, MD 21237. 410-780-2006. Fax: 410-780-2035. E-mail: joannero@helix.org. Reviewers interested in writing reviews for publication should contact Dr Rosenfeld as well.

Women's Health

Menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy: Effective Patient Care on CD-ROM, Isaac Schiff, Newton, Mass, Silver Platter Education, 1998, \$149—Single/individual user license, \$399—Multiple/institutional user license.

This CD-ROM covers most issues regarding hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Included are controversial issues, results of major trials on HRT, and women's views on HRT. The objectives are appropriate for women's health providers. All 26 chapters are organized in a logical and clear manner, and the layout is easy to follow. There is a voice guiding the discussion, which adds to the value of the educational experience.

Graphics and charts are used liberally to demonstrate trends and facts. The graphics are useful in understanding the hormonal changes, particularly in the section on the physiological changes in menopause. There is an impressive interactive case-study chapter, where the practitioner meets patients inquiring about HRT.

The information is quite relevant for primary care providers. Women

are depending on us to put all the evidence into perspective. We can only do so if we ourselves are better educated about HRT.

Because of its clarity and simplicity, the CD-ROM is suitable for all audiences. Because of its in-depth information and scientific approach, it is still interesting for physicians experienced in the use of HRT.

Unfortunately, practicality is the only weak area I noticed on my review of the information. The CD-ROM is loaded with facts. However, it does not contain much practical information about prescribing and monitoring patients who are placed on HRT. Not discussed are dosing, medication interaction, laboratory interactions, managing side effects, and when to discontinue HRT. Special populations are not considered in a clear, effective manner, nor is it clear when to choose the different delivery systems available.

Although expensive at \$149 for individuals, it is money well spent. I was quite impressed with this material. It updated me on valid scientific information about HRT. I will use it as a teaching tool for family practice residents.

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Women's Sexuality Across the Life Span, Judith Daniluk, New York, Guilford Press, 1998, 358 pp., \$39.95, hardcover.

The author of this book takes a broad look at the ways in which our culture shapes women's views of their sexual selves, their sexual experiences, and the ways in which they define and conceive sexual experiences. The book is organized into sections that follow the life cycle of girls and women. The book attempts to integrate biological, cultural, sociological, and psychological perspectives on sexual development and experiences from a feminist perspective.

Daniluk describes the sexual experience of women from young childhood through senior years with a lens of a feminist scholar. The book describes well the reasons in this culture that women struggle with their own sexual development and experience and invites the reader to question many "givens" about sexuality. Most notable of these assumptions is the limiting view of sex as equivalent to heterosexual intercourse, which is via Anna Freud's view of, "Sex is something you do, and sexuality is something you are."

The audience intended for this book is more likely scholars in feminist studies, psychologists, or women searching for more self-understanding, rather than for health care providers. It may be useful to clinicians who wish to understand the roots of many patients' conflicts and struggles to claim healthy sexual experiences and relationships. The book is short on biological and organic perspectives and somewhat out of date on more recent thinking in sexology. It does not address the different sexual dysfunctions that occur in women or integrate these diagnoses into the broad construct the book covers. The book clearly would not serve as a manual for clinicians working with women's specific complaints regarding their sexual experiences.

For clinicians who wish for practical information that will be useful in direct care of women, the bibliography included in the end of the book, by topical area, offers a helpful resource for patients and providers. There are again some omissions from this bibliography in the area of clinical resources, but these omissions probably reflect the author's training and perspective in writing this book.

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The Politics of Women's Health: Exploring Agency and Autonomy, *Susan Sherwin and the Feminist Health Care Ethics Research Network, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1998, 320 pp., \$60 hardcover, \$20 paperback.*

This text provides a marvelous overview of the topic of women's health from a feminist, sociopolitical standpoint. The book comes from the Feminist Health Care Ethics Research Network of Canada, an interdisciplinary group of researchers that includes physicians, social scientists, and attorneys. Sherwin and her colleagues

outline many of the issues that affect women's health worldwide and how the choices women make about their health are constrained or supported by social norms and political conditions. They work from the basic premise that economic and social conditions are primary determinants of health, especially so for women, whose political and social power in the world is still often limited.

One of the real strengths of this book is that while it has its own merit as a complete work, the individual chapters also stand well on their own. The chapter on North America's and Japan's contrasting approaches to women in middle age and the one on women in Benin, a small African nation with high maternal morbidity and mortality, were particularly rich with examples of how social constructs impede or support women's health care options. Chapters on domestic violence and on research involving human subjects and the growing trend of geneticization and biological reductionism further develop the theme of choice constrained by larger political factors. The authors remind us that poverty and violence remain greater threats to women's health than genes.

As a sociologist teaching in a medical school, I found this book refreshing in its ability to convey social, political, and economic concepts with clinically relevant illustrations. Students, residents, and faculty will find this text powerful in its ability to offer perspectives different from the medical model. While this text can serve as a useful reference on the political forces that influence women's health, any given chapter could also serve as a wonderful starting point for discussions with students, residents, and faculty about women's health and what the medical model overlooks.

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Behavioral Medicine and Women: A Comprehensive Handbook, *Elaine Blechman and Kelly Brownell, New York, Guilford Press, 1998, 856 pp., \$75, hardcover.*

This handbook successfully explores the interplay between biology and psychology in all aspects of women's health. The book is divided into nine sections with 141 chapters. In addition to standard sections on body image and substance use, sexuality and reproduction, and behavioral manifestations of psychological disorders and prevention, the text examines life-course perspectives on women's health, cultural effects on gender and health, health care paradigms and policies, and stress and coping. Each chapter is well written and concise, ranging from 5–10 pages. A helpful annotated list of references at the end of each chapter is an added bonus.

To assess the content of such a comprehensive collection is difficult. I selected two topics that I have been thinking about and used the book as a reference. My first choice was aging women and relationships, a common clinical topic in any women's health practice. I found a relevant, detailed chapter on sexuality and aging that included discussions of physiological changes in sexual response, as well as cultural attitudes toward older women's sexuality. The chapter about aging explores the changing roles and connections in a woman's life and the importance of context in relationships. The stress and coping section of the book provides chapters that examine related topics: multiple roles, life events, hardiness, and resilience. Each discussion further emphasizes the importance of context, strength, and flexibility in determining women's relationships.

My second topic choice was the complex issue of adolescent sexuality. The chapter on adolescence in the life course perspective section

discusses individual changes and social contexts in adolescence and provides a good background on the topic. The adolescent sexuality chapter explores the sexual behaviors of young women. The chapter on social comparisons discusses how women often compare themselves to others and use the comparison as a measure of self-esteem. The entire section on body image and substance use is related to adolescent self-esteem and sexual behaviors. The chapter on school-based clinics in the section on health care paradigms, policies, and settings gives an overview of the need for and effectiveness of school-based health care.

This book is appropriate for learners at all levels. Though the scope of material is broad and consequently fairly superficial, it is an excellent supplemental text for women's health practitioners and provides important perspectives on behavioral issues in women's health.

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Aging Issues

Conditions of Aging, Lanyard Dial, Baltimore, Williams and Wilkins, 1999, 200 pp., \$29.95, paperback.

Among the virtual explosion of textbooks, guides, and handbooks on geriatric medicine is Dr Dial's contribution, *Conditions of Aging*. This new book is part of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) new quick reference guide series for family physicians. According to the series introduction, these books are intended to assist family physicians with the broad knowledge base unique to our specialty by providing the information necessary to manage the majority of patients with these problems. Topics covered in each book were chosen by family physicians as those that would be most helpful to their day-to-day practice of family

practice. Family physicians with a special interest in the topic will author each book in the series.

The author begins this book with a nice summary of the important issues in the care of the older adult, that is, the emphasis on function rather than disease, stopping drugs instead of starting them, and the importance of end-of-life care. There are 10 chapters, covering congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, dementia, depression, hypertension, osteoarthritis, Parkinson's disease, falls, and comfort care for terminal illness. Each chapter is presented in the order that a physician evaluates a patient, beginning with the chief complaint, history, examination, diagnostic tests, differential diagnoses, treatment, follow-up, and patient education. One interesting feature is a large diagnostic chart at the beginning of the book that links clinical manifestations with other findings to generate diagnostic considerations.

How well does Dr Dial succeed? In a word, admirably. The chapters are well organized and readable. The many tables allow useful information to be gleaned rapidly. Headings are frequent but succinct. Suggested readings are by recognized authors and are current. Numerous appendices provide patient information about advance directives, caring for family members with dementia or heart failure, urinary incontinence, and reducing the risk of falls, as well as the Mini-mental State Examination.

No book is perfect. Depending on one's interest and knowledge level, some might think that certain topics are covered too briefly, but the AAFP and Dr Dial have given us a practical, affordable guide that I believe family physicians will refer to frequently. Comprehensive textbooks of geriatric medicine will always have their place, but practicing physicians need more books like this one.

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Textbook of Clinical Neurology, Eric Pappert, Christopher Goetz, Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders, 1999, 1,248 pp., \$75, hardcover.

Family physicians and residents are constantly facing the challenge of using a patient's neurologic complaint and appropriate work-up to identify a neurological disorder. This textbook provides the reader with the entire spectrum of clinical neurology, starting with the clinical history and progressing through the clinical syndromes.

This textbook is organized into chapters with sections on history and definitions, clinical history, examination information, evaluation guidelines, clinical syndromes, general management goals, and reviews. The organization allows the reader to link neurologic anatomy with the physical examination. It also provides a discussion of the appropriate diagnostic testing based on physical findings. The final sections in the chapters give details on the clinical syndromes that correlate with the history, physical findings, and diagnostic testing, which can be used as a reference when faced with a challenging diagnosis.

The textbook is detailed and would be difficult to read for prolonged periods of time. There are many graphics and photographs that add value to the text. The textbook does have a section on neuroanatomy that can sometimes provide important information but at other times gives too much detail.

I believe this is a well-written textbook that would serve as an excellent reference. Target audiences for this textbook are practicing neurologists, family physicians, and other primary care physicians. The text would be suitable for a family practice residency training library but too detailed for the residents' personal library.

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