

Opinions on recent titles

Title: Involving patients and the public - How to do it better
Author: Ruth Chambers
Publisher: Radcliffe Primary Care
ISBN Number: 1-85775-393-3
Cost: £17.95
Reviewed by: Judy Murty, MB, ChB, DRCOG, MFFP
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The book describes methodologies for obtaining views and encouraging local people and health professionals to participate in obtaining the public view of services. There is a review of how to develop questionnaires and satisfaction surveys. No validated examples are given, and the example in the appendix is acknowledged to be still undergoing research. Following chapters cover the development of focus groups, and other strategies such as citizen juries. There is a small section that addresses giving information to patients, which most practitioners should be doing already.

In summary, it appears to be a superficial review of strategies to involve the public into the decision making of health care. It gives a basic outline for anyone directly involved in developing local strategies. However, to do it effectively there would be a need for time and resources which a busy clinician would find hard to find.

It was not clearly stated to whom the book would be relevant. The author acknowledges that there has to be a large change in attitude to obtaining views of the public in decision making of local health strategies. The overall affect of the book is to show how daunting a task it can be.

Title: Encyclopedia of reproductive technologies
Author: Annette Burfoot
Publisher: Westview Press
ISBN Number: 0-8133-6658-5
Cost: £58.95
Reviewed by: Ian Page, FRCOG
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This book takes advantage of the dictionary definitions of it's title, and contains general information on many branches of knowledge regarding the applied science of the process of reproduction. The editor is a sociologist, and the 55 contributors include sociologists, social scientists and IVF scientists. Despite the large number of contributors the style is consistent, but each chapter does not give actual references - simply suggestions for further reading. I found this unhelpful, as it prevented any cross-referencing between some bold statements in the text and their original source. The book covers the history of reproduction, current technologies, and also reviews the legal situation in many countries. There were some surprising inclusions, such as breast-feeding, abortion and surrogacy. They seem to have been included because of the book's strong theme of women's rights, and how men have used (and continue to use) reproductive technology to control women.

It was an interesting book to read, but would be of limited

use to most clinicians as the depth of scientific information was very limited. The repetition of feminist themes was also distracting (to this male, at least!).

Title: Contraception and office gynaecology
Editors: Ali Kubba, Joseph Sanfilippo, Naomi Hampton
Publisher: WB Saunders
ISBN Number: 0-7020-2361-2
Cost: £45.00
Reviewed by: Catherine Nash
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The Editors set themselves a challenging task: to comprehensively cover all aspects of reproductive health in the primary care setting. Most of the 52 contributors are from the UK and USA, and are well known for their work in this area. The 35 chapters include contraception, sexual health, menopause, pre-conception care and community gynaecology, as well as more general considerations of subjects such as epidemiology and management. Male issues are not forgotten, with chapters on hormonal contraception and screening for genital tract cancer. The aim has been to provide evidence-based information for those working in this field. Each chapter can be read as a review of a particular topic, and is fully referenced, with additional lists of further resources such as self-help literature for patients, books for professionals and tips for good practice.

I find this book very readable and useful. The well-presented tables are easy to read and contribute to the use of the book as a quick reference. The authors are to be congratulated on writing such a stimulating book. I am sure that it will become one of the standard textbooks for those working in reproductive health care.

Title: Supporting effective contraceptive use. A resource for practice nurses
Author: Sheila White
Publisher: Health Education Authority (HEA)
ISBN Number: HEA 1998: 0-7521-1313-5
HEA 2000: 0-7521-1866-8
Reviewed by: Sadie J Berridge, RGN, FPCert
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Thank you from Practice Nurses for this highly comprehensive pack and book, which is most welcome. Information is easily and quickly accessible and enables us to give support and accurate advice to our patients with confidence.

The book, which accompanies the cards, is a good prompt to talking with our medical and clerical colleagues, to update the surgery protocols and to ensure a better service to our patients. Opportunities constantly arise for us to counsel and educate in all aspects of sexual health.

A small criticism is not professional but purely practical. The pack, which contains the cards, is weak and soon gives way under their weight. Mine is already bending badly on my desk.