

Opinions on recent titles

Title: Information and IT for primary care
Author: Alan Gilles
Publisher: Radcliffe Medical Press
ISBN Number: 1-85775-368-7
Cost: £21.95
Reviewed by: Joanna Walker, DFFP, DRCOG
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I now have a better understanding of the systems used in practice, what they can achieve, and their limitations. The book provides an insight into the political and commercial forces surrounding the development of the systems we have at present. I found the exercises long-winded in making their point, and there was not enough about the Internet for me. However, a lot of jargon has been demystified and I would now feel happier at addressing the use of IT in the surgery. There were also some useful references included.

Title: Contraception your questions answered – 3rd Edition
Author: John Guillebaud
Publisher: Churchill Livingstone
ISBN Number: 0-443-06153
Cost: £21.95
Reviewed by: Lesley Bacon, Consultant in Family Planning, Community Health South London NHS Trust, Department of Family Planning, St Giles, St Giles Road, London, SE5 7RN, UK.

Reviewing 'Guillebaud' feels rather like commenting on Gardeners' Question Time or Delia Smith; this book is not designed as a heavy academic text, but as the place that most practising clinicians will first go to for authoritative, personal help based on practical experience. It is very affordable, which adds to its appeal for the generalist and the trainee.

The start of each chapter provides an index to the contents, after that the question and answer format is used. Whether this format appeals in print is a matter of taste, but now that general practice is almost universally computerised, would the book lend itself well to an electronic version with a search facility? There are no long lists of references (although important ones appear in the text), but in this edition there is a long and annotated extract from the WHO 1998 report on the combined pill and cardiovascular disease.

Other new features include sections on Persona, the IUS, Implanon, GyneFix and progestogen-only emergency contraception. However, it antedates the discontinuation of GyneT380 and the introduction of Levonelle. Would supplements or a web site keep everyone up to date?

Title: Caring for Muslim patients
Editors: Aziz Sheikh, Rashid Gatrads
Publisher: Radcliffe Medical Press.
ISBN Number: 1-85775-372-0
Cost: £17.95 (160 pp)
Reviewed by: Bashir Qureshi, FRCGP, DCO, AFOM, MFFP
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Islam is the second largest religion in Britain (1.6 million Muslims), in Europe (8 million) and in the world (1.6 billion). By evolution, in the past 50 years, the UK has become a multi-religious society and the number of non-Christian citizens is rising. As with other religions, women occupy a central role in the Islamic faith. Some women are liberal and westernised, but a vast majority is devoutly religious. As the taboo of talking about politics and religion in polite conversation is being gradually lifted, many health professionals are trying to understand the religious convictions of their patients, particularly women. This book is a timely publication in that it gives a clear view of devout Muslim women's reproductive healthcare needs, including family planning, along with other valuable information.

The authors have sensitively emphasised that doctors and nurses working in family planning services, particularly those who deal with devout Muslim women, should consider five key points:

- Respect for the patient's cultural, religious and ethnic beliefs (as required by the Patients' Charter 1992 and the Human Rights Act 1998).
- Women need to be seen by women health professionals because PURDAH (a veil) is an essential requirement for them.
- Courtship, sex outside marriage and open sex-education are strongly forbidden.
- Traditionally, menstruating women have to be exempt from religious rites such as prayers, fasting and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Any vaginal bleeding due to the pill, IUCD, and cervical smear procedure may be misunderstood as menstruation. It should be explained to them that this traumatic bleeding is not menstrual bleeding and the same religious constraints do not apply.
- Islamic law generally discourages contraception, but family planning to space children is acceptable. Sensitive negotiation is required in a consultation.

I recommend this book unreservedly to doctors, nurses, researchers and all those involved in multi-religious healthcare in Britain and abroad. I fear that in a library it is likely to be stolen.