

BOOK REVIEWS

Opinions on recent titles

Russell A, Thompson E, Thompson M. **Contraception across cultures**. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000. ISBN: 1-85973-386-7. Cost: £14.99. 252pp.

Contraception affects the lives of the majority of heterosexual couples world-wide in their child-bearing years, irrespective of income and social status. The authors emphasise that contraception can only be understood and accepted with reference to the political and economic structures as well as the social and cultural forms of the people who may use it.

Six anthropologist and six sociologist authors have contributed to this authentic book. The chapters are based on the papers which they presented in an international conference held at the University of Durham in September 1996. They have described their observations and cultural beliefs about family planning of women from many countries, including those from Bangladesh, Israel, Mexico and Uzbekistan.

The strength of this book lies in that it takes the research perspective on contraception from anthropological and social angles. It has references and tables relevant to research scholars. The weakness lies in the fact that the text makes heavy reading and is devoid of any sense of humour, which is a basic requirement of British culture. It reminds me of documents written by civil servants.

However, every library should consider including it in their purchasing lists for readers of the thinking kind.

Bashir Qureshi, FRCGP, MFFP, DCH, AFOM, Hon FRSH
GP in West London; Author of 'Transcultural Medicine' and expert witness in Transcultural Medicine and Transcultural Issues.

The Infertility Manual. Rao KA, Brinsden PR (Eds). India: Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India, 2001. ISBN: 81-7179-825-X. Cost: Indian Rs 500.00. 523 pp.

This book, a publication from the Federation of the Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India, is a comprehensive text on infertility (47 chapters, 523 pages) with contributions from experts from Bangalore to Bombay, Cambridge to Colombo and Melbourne to Milan. The editors have carefully included the numerous major issues on the subject in this volume, which is a ready source of information for both infertility specialists and gynaecologists at large.

Although it may be inappropriate to select chapters for special mention, the section on ovulation induction provides the most up-to-date science and guidance, with emphasis on clinical management.

There are some inevitable areas of overlap, some typographical errors and also errors in language.

With rapid advances in assisted reproductive technologies and adjunct therapies, the psychological and social issues related to treatment have become more complex. Although the subject of counselling has been dealt with to an extent in the first and concluding chapters, not enough emphasis has been laid by the authors on the art of choices of counselling or the consequences from the lack of it.

The book concludes with an excellent chapter on the UK

experience in dealing with the ethical, legal and political issues associated with assisted reproduction technology.

This manual deserves a place in hospital libraries.

RK Bhathena, FRCOG, MD, MFFP
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Mirsky J, Radlett M. **No paradise yet: The world's women face the new century**. The panos Institute and Zed Books, 2000. ISBN: 1-85649-922-7.

'No paradise yet' is a graphic look at society today and how it treats women. It is an easy and absorbing read for anyone with an interest in women's medicine.

The Panos Institute brings together many different journalists, each contributing a chapter. Each journalist conveys a wealth of examples of oppression and misery.

One example from Pakistan tells us that under Islamic laws if women make a claim of rape, eye-witness evidence is considered primary, rather than forensic evidence. Pregnancy as a result also shows evidence of consent. Any women, under these laws, could find themselves punished as a result of such abuse.

In Mexico it is not unknown for workplaces to insist on routine pregnancy testing among the workforce. Pregnancy may cause contracts to be terminated.

Over the past decade there have been several conferences in Cairo and Beijing. These have tried to facilitate and promote women's rights and needs. The conferences indeed provide a political platform for reform. Unfortunately, as this book demonstrates, the dissemination of such reforms is constantly hampered by tradition and custom.

These moving examples provide us with a harsh reminder that we have a long way to go to achieve basic rights world-wide for women.

L Patterson, MB ChB, MRCGP, DCH, DFFP,
Ships Doctor, Princess/P&O Cruises, Southampton

RCOG Complete women's health. Lumsden MA, Hickey M (eds) London: Thorsons, 2000. ISBN 0-7225-3430-2. 309 pp. Cost: £12-99.

This book is mostly for patients of obstetricians and gynaecologists and their supporters. There is some discussion of general health and development, but there seems a clear and laudable intention to describe and explain childbirth and interventions and the range of gynaecological conditions and treatments. In this sense it is comprehensive. The descriptions are brief and easy to read with plenty of simple diagrams. It is an attractive book, not being encumbered with too much technical detail or off-putting high-flown language. The contributors are legion and appear as a glittering dramatis personae on page 7 (not all Ms and Fs — see President's Foreword). Editing must have been a herculean task and the two gynaecologists are to be congratulated on a 'well made' book which will be useful to many women and for GPs, family planning clinics and gynaecological units to hold for lending out to clients.

There are very few typographical errors, but we wish the diagram of an IUD in the uterus had shown one that is actively used today. Some might think the book's title more all-embracing than the content.

Dilys Cossey, OBE, BA, FFFP

National Chair of Brook Advisory Centres, London, UK

John McEwan, MA, FRCOG, FRCGP, FFFP

Retired Consultant in Family Planning, London, UK

Francome C. **Improving men's health**. Middlesex: Middlesex University Press: 2000. ISBN: 1898-253-36-6. Cost: £14.00.

The author's claim to fame is running the London marathon whilst juggling three clubs! He sets out the inequalities between men's and women's health on a global scale. He then proceeds to look at the main areas of health in separate chapters. In each chapter he looks at the problem, and then has a conclusion and recommendations for action. The facts and figures are presented in an easily accessible way. For example, contrasting the diet of an 11-year-old in terms of sweets, crisps and biscuits versus vegetables. There are some snappy quotes, e.g.: 'Smoking makes your legs fall off' (Page 69).

This is a good book for those who want to look at men's health issues. The bibliography gives a source of further reading.

Peter Elliott, MRCS, RCP, MFFP

GP, Essex, UK

Other books of interest

Griffey H. **How to get pregnant**. London: Bloomsbury, 2001. Cost: £7.99

Fully revised and updated, 'How to get pregnant' is an indispensable guide to helping you achieve a happy, healthy pregnancy, giving you all you need to know about fertility and conception in one volume. The average couple takes around 6 months to conceive, and as many as a quarter of all couples take up to 1 year. After this time around one in six couples will continue to have problems and may need to seek help. Included are all you need to know about the latest developments, from ICIS to alternative therapies and nutritional advice, and all the most useful website and contact addresses, this book provides vital, easily accessible information for couples at all stages.

Source: Bloomsbury

Chesterman Phillips H. **Choose the sex of your baby the natural way**. London: Bloomsbury, 2001. Cost £6.99

"I don't know why it works, but it does for the vast majority I have referred to her. I like her method because it is simple and is completely free of side effects."

Dr Yehudi Gordon, Consultant Obstetrician, *Mail*

Source: Bloomsbury