

# BOOK REVIEWS

**Clinical Protocols in Obstetrics and Gynecology** (2nd edn). John E Turrentine. New York, NY: Parthenon Publishing (available from CRC Press), 2003. ISBN: 1 84214 128 7. Price: £53.99. Pages: 396 (hardback)

This book is certainly full of useful information, which is readily obtained due to its alphabetical approach. It is more an encyclopaedia than a text book and could be useful for MRCOG candidates. However, it is based entirely on practice in the USA and some facts and figures may not be appropriate for UK practice or examinations. One should be very careful if learning protocols from this book, to compare them with guidelines issued by local units and the RCOG. Some abbreviations are not typical of the English/Latin used in the UK, but there is a reference list at the back. 'Examination Schedules' made interesting reading and again highlighted the differences between a largely private health care system and the NHS; see shoulder dystocia and screening for diabetes in pregnancy.

The section on 'Contraception' was also interesting. The first hormonal contraceptive mentioned (listed in order of most commonly used) was 'the patch' which is unlikely to become first line in the UK due to its cost. Efficacy of each method was given as a percentage rather than using the Pearl index. Again recommendations for use vary between the UK and USA so beware.

I liked the patient guide for 'Premenstrual Syndrome' though I'm not sure some of the suggestions were very evidence-based.

In conclusion, this book provides a wealth of American-based information at your fingertips. It is fun to browse through and useful for MCQs. It would be useful for trainees in obstetrics and gynaecology and may provide a source of quick and useful information for GPs too.

Reviewed by **Tamsin Groom**, MB ChB, MRCOG  
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**Contraceptive Dilemmas** (1st edn). C Wilkinson and A Szarewski. St Albans, UK: Altman Publishing, 2003. ISBN: 1 86036 024 6. Price: £9.99. Pages: 106 (paperback)

The stated intent of this book is to provide a problem-orientated source of up-to-date information on commonly encountered contraceptive dilemmas. It is aimed at family planning doctors and nurses, GPs, gynaecologists and other health care specialists. There is also a section on new products. The authors are well-known and respected figures in the UK family planning arena.

The book is simply laid out in two sections, being illustrated only by tables. The style is mostly discursive, making rapid use difficult.

Part 1 covers common management problems with combined oral contraceptives (COCs), then COCs and cancer. Sections on Depo-Provera® and bone density and arterial disease follow, then sections on IUDs, condoms and, finally an interesting section on recent developments and future directions in contraceptive methods.

Part 2 covers contraception in three different user groups: the young, over 40-year-old women, and women at risk of venous thromboembolism.

Within the text there is much useful comment on accepted modern family planning practice in the UK. In addition, there is a sociopolitical synopsis of international developments in the field of young people's sexual health. However, the book fails to mention some key facts such as the lower age of consent in The Netherlands.

Professionals unfamiliar with the newer COCs and progestogen-only pills available in the

UK will certainly be the wiser by reading this book. It might have made distinguishing the various pills easier if there had been a reference table comparing the variable contents, rather than including these details (and statistical information) in the text.

Such a slim volume cannot be comprehensive but I was frustrated by some omissions. Why is there no section on dilemmas in adults with incapacity? Or more direct references to obesity? Or postpartum contraception? Or ethnic minorities? Why do some chapters conclude with recommended reading and others with imprecise and sometimes old references? Are comparisons with the USA necessarily valid?

Some details in the text would be open to debate; of course most long-term users of Depo-Provera® are actually happy with the method – otherwise they would have stopped it; surely side effects can be troublesome, especially weight gain? Much has happened in hormone replacement therapy thinking in the last year and I suspect some comments on rather free usage may well now be superseded with tighter advice.

This is a useful update for the target readership but not a seriously comprehensive reference work.

Reviewed by **Penny Watson**, MFFP, MPH  
GP, Edinburgh, UK

**Fertility and Conception: The Complete Guide to Getting Pregnant**. Zita West. London, UK: Dorling Kindersley, 2003. ISBN: 0 7513 3865 6. Price: £14.99. Pages: 192 (paperback)

This is a book that you could definitely recommend to clients, whether they are trying to achieve pregnancy for the first time, or contemplating fertility treatments. It is clearly laid out with some informative diagrams and fascinating illustrations and images. The chapters are all very readable and divided into six subject headings. The emphasis is on good health and a holistic approach.

The first chapter deals with the basic facts of reproduction in men, women, and the effect of age. Each stage of the female cycle and the early stages of fertilisation are explained clearly.

The second chapter deals with the effect of lifestyle on fertility, not just diet, smoking and alcohol. It looks broadly at the influence of stress and maintaining healthy relationships as being a significant area for couple to keep in perspective.

Chapter 3 focuses a little more on physical fitness and diet for the preconceptional time and conception. It also looks at how best to improve sperm quality. There is also a very clear section on understanding fertility signs, such as cervical secretions.

Chapter 4 looks at the issues of subfertility; the causes and the first steps of investigation. At each stage there are many good tips and self-help measures to enable clients to keep some control. There are also positive case histories to illustrate the different points.

The final chapter takes the client through the maze of assisted conception techniques. They are clearly illustrated with lots of case histories and answers to common questions.

I think that overall this is an excellent text, and would also be useful for family planning nurses, students and paramedical staff involved in women's health.

Reviewed by **Laura Patterson**, MRCGP, DFFP  
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**Osteoporosis: Your Questions Answered**. J Fordham. London, UK: Churchill Livingstone (available from Elsevier), 2004. ISBN: 0 443 07366 X. Price: £19.99. Pages: 203 (paperback)

Osteoporosis affects 1 in 3 women and 1 in 12 men. Patients with osteoporosis are at a very high

risk of fractures, which are associated with significant morbidity and mortality. The burden of osteoporosis in the UK is manifested by more than 230 000 fractures per year with an annual cost of £1.7 billion to the health service. This does not begin to measure the costs to the individual. This book raises awareness of the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis for professionals and patients. Its strength is in its 'question and answer' format, readily accessible to all GPs and primary care professionals, and with specific reference to key issues raised by patients. In such chronic diseases it is important to engage patients in understanding the part they can play in management.

The format of this book makes it a useful quick reference source to answer questions such as: Who is at risk? Who should be referred for a DEXA scan? What are the roles of other scanning techniques or bone markers? It is a well-referenced, comprehensive text and the sources of its recommendations are clear. Any book attempting to summarise treatment in this area will be out of date before it is published. This book does refer to the Women's Health Initiative study on hormone replacement therapy (HRT) but does not mention the latest results from the study, nor does it mention the Scottish Intercollegiate Guideline Network Guideline or the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh 2003 Consensus Statement on use of HRT.

The book clearly defines who is at risk of osteoporosis and explores some of the ways in which these patients may be identified. However, access to scanning is not discussed and the practicalities of delivering a local service at the interface between primary and secondary care needs to be considered.

Although this book emphasises the dilemmas facing patients, there is little detail on what individuals can do to protect themselves against osteoporotic fractures. Dietary calcium and exercise are mentioned but more detailed advice would be helpful.

In summary, this book is presented in an attractive, accessible format for all those wishing to know more about osteoporosis. It has added value in exploring questions frequently asked by patients.

Reviewed by **Patricia Donald**, MRCGP  
GP Principal, Edinburgh, UK

**The Management of the Menopause** (3rd edn). John Studd (ed.). London, UK: Parthenon Publishing (available from CRC Press), 2003. ISBN: 1 84214 137 6. Price: £59.95. Pages: 294 (hardback)

Major debate continues over the management of the menopause and the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy as new data and reporting studies are evaluated. Inevitably the debate has moved on since this book was published but there are sound, relevant contributions from this international range of authors. The editor, John Studd, is well experienced in drawing on important reference topics for clinicians. The information is well laid out and very user-friendly for topic-specific information. The book presents a very clinically orientated approach to management of the menopause though many authors do make reference to a more holistic approach.

A useful development is the section on Internet information on the menopause, giving a guide for both the general public and the professional user. The section on alternative therapies is timely and will doubtless be expanded in years to come.

This will be a useful reference text for trainees and for clinicians with an interest in the field.

Reviewed by **Ursula Bankowska**, MB ChB, MFFP  
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