

## HEALTH ECONOMICS/BOOK REVIEWS

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## Book Reviews

**Step-by-Step Ultrasound in Gynecology.** K Singh, N Malhotra. New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2004. ISBN: 0-07-144655-9. Price: £17.99. Pages: 126 (paperback)

This cheap, pocket-sized book's very tempting premise is that it will give readers an overview of all of gynaecological diagnosis and management using ultrasonography. It is written by an ultrasonographer and an obstetrician/gynaecologist practising in India, and is aimed at a mixed readership. Very short chapters cover the principles of ultrasound and normal female anatomy, before going on to illustration-rich chapters on the ultrasonographic appearance of the normal female pelvis and various uterine and ovarian disorders. Unfortunately the image quality is often poor, and the labelling of the images did not always clarify what was being demonstrated. The most successful images are those that are correlated with findings at hysteroscopy or laparoscopy. I had hoped the accompanying mini-CD-ROM would make the images clearer, but this was not the case. The last chapter has flowcharts for the ultrasonographer illustrating approaches to common gynaecological

problems, but these are often not relevant to current UK practice.

Overall, I felt that the style was frustratingly brief for my needs, although ultrasonographers with no gynaecological training may well find it useful.

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**Prenatal Tests: The Facts.** L De Crispigny and F Chervenak. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-19-852084-0. Price: £9.99. Pages: 143 (paperback)

This slim volume is one of a series of medical titles aimed at the public and promising "all the facts you need – straight from the experts". In this case the experts are obstetricians practising in Australia and the USA; the target audience is pregnant women in Australia, the UK and USA.

In these countries, increasingly sophisticated tests are offered to pregnant women; yet the interpretation, risks and benefits of these tests are often misunderstood. Women are asked to make choices about which tests they wish to take – and may have to consider paying for some or all tests.

This book helpfully describes all prenatal tests by stage of pregnancy. Ultrasound is discussed in detail, and there are exquisite images of the normal fetus at various stages of development. Serum screening, amniocentesis and chorionic villus sampling are also discussed at length. Crucially the risks, benefits and limitations are mentioned, stressing that no test can guarantee a healthy baby. There is also a clear glossary to explain technical terms.

The text certainly feels "straight from the experts"; it is clearly written but highly technical and includes details of very rare complications and conditions. I shared this book with one pregnant couple who felt it was readable and clear but rather too detailed for most women. Many women could become highly anxious after reading this book. Conversely, couples grappling with abnormal results or high-risk pregnancies will be much better informed having read this book. It is certainly superior to the random business of surfing the Internet for information. Medical professionals might also appreciate this book and feel better prepared to discuss abnormal results with couples.

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