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BOOK REVIEWS

Managing Erectile Dysfunction. M Cummings. St Albans, UK: Altman Publishing, 2006. ISBN: 1-86036-032-7. Price: £9.95. Pages: 78 (paperback)

This little gem (78 pages) is a valuable asset to health care professionals in primary care (general practitioners, nurses and psychosexual therapists). It should help health care professionals to openly discuss erectile dysfunction (ED) with clients they treat in everyday practice and to feel at ease when discussing the problem and its impact on their quality of life. It outlines the benefits of treating ED in primary care and links these with commonly associated medical conditions that contribute to it (e.g. cardiovascular disease and diabetes). Having the knowledge of various treatment options at hand will enable health care professionals to help clients access the best treatment for their individual needs.

The chapters are laid out as common questions posed by health care professionals and the answers have enough detail without being too academic. The algorithm in Chapter 6 is very helpful in this respect. The chapter on drug therapy is sufficiently detailed to allow a discussion with clients and initiation of therapy. There is a chapter devoted to alternatives to drug therapy and various methods are briefly discussed here. Use of intra-urethral and intra-corporeal injection will need referral to experienced therapists who can give their time to adequately explain the procedure to the client. I especially liked the use of boxes at the end of chapters summarising key points. This book is easy to read through as well as to dip in and out

of. I would have preferred colour instead of grey for the text boxes within the chapters and after each chapter as it would have made it more attractive to pick up and read as well as being easier on the eyes.

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Women's Health: A Practical Guide for Healthcare Professionals. S Bekaert. Oxford, UK: Radcliffe Publishing, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-1-84619-029-2. Price: £21.95. Pages: 208 (paperback)

I accepted this book with interest, hoping to find that it would support and inform my practice as a nurse in family planning and well-women services, where many women attend with gynaecological or reproductive health problems.

The title states that it is a text for health care professionals. The introduction states that lay people may find it useful, written – as it is – using the vernacular. My heart started to sink. It dropped further when reading an explanation of 'plasma' as the fluid part of the blood. What kind of health care professionals are we talking about?

It is written in the 'symptom sorter' format, an approach with which I am unfamiliar. The book is structured around symptoms, conditions, tests and procedures. There are chapters on contraception and sexually transmitted infections at the end.

The symptom sorter section is useful. Using headings such as 'menstrual symptoms' and 'breast symptoms', presenting symptoms are described and differential diagnoses suggested (common, occasional and rare). Specific considerations in history taking, however, are listed but not explained; so much that might be useful is not covered. The author suggests that after arriving at a working diagnosis the reader should turn to the tests section before reading more about the conditions, which information is supported by 'reputable resources'.

While the symptom sorter is an interesting way of presenting the material, there is a real inconsistency in the amount of detail and analysis in the book. For example, under the symptom of vaginal dryness, a (rare) cause is Sjögren's syndrome. An explanation of this condition is not included in the 'conditions' section. However, other conditions, such as Bornholm disease and Klinefelter's syndrome, are. It is hard to fathom where they fit in the scheme of women's health.

The resources are, with few exceptions, websites and there is no referencing as such in the book. The section on contraception at the back cites as references two websites illustrating male and female condom use. The FFPRHC (now the FSRH) is included as a "useful resource".

This text does not know who its audience is, and consequently I would find it hard to recommend it to anyone.

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