

their cervix, may still prefer to take the chance that the pain they may experience will be significant rather than have the Dilapan-S inserted.

Conclusions

This pilot study suggests that the Dilapan-S/misoprostol combination reduces the pain associated with medical TOP. Future studies should address the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of this combination in comparison to mifepristone/misoprostol and surgical TOP.

Statements on funding and competing interests

Funding None identified.

Competing interests None identified.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Oxford Handbook of Reproductive Medicine and Family Planning (Oxford Handbooks Series). Enda McVeigh, Roy Homburg, John Guillebaud. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-920380-2. Price: £24.95. Pages: 456 (paperback)

This is a well-written handbook by renowned experts that provides a concise, practical and evidence-based coverage of the subject. The format makes it easy to read and, like most good books, the information is conveyed in a logical sequence. Sad as this may sound, it made an enjoyable morning read for me while enduring the daily ordeal of using the London underground!

The book is rightly divided into two parts: reproductive medicine and family planning. This probably underscores the very wide scope of the subjects and also the reality of their actual practice. The first part begins with developmental origins, sexual differentiation, biochemistry and steroidogenesis. This is followed by a description of the physiology of puberty and adolescence, menstrual disorders, the ovaries and disorders of function, as well as the menopause. However, a big chunk of this part is devoted to infertility—nine out of its eighteen chapters – and covers the initial advice, investigations, management strategies and assisted reproductive technology.

The second part of the handbook deals with family planning. I thought the chapter on the combined oral contraceptive pill was particularly enlightening and quite detailed. It provides a good account of the topic, balancing the benefits versus the risks, highlighting practical prescribing issues, counselling and ongoing supervision, drug interactions and fertility considerations. There was also brief mention of transdermal and transvaginal combined hormonal contraception, with the inherent advantages of these routes of administration. A chapter on special considerations outlines how a provider can ensure a woman is not pregnant, and includes useful information on contraception at the climacteric. The appendix highlights the use of licensed products in an unlicensed way, essential websites in reproductive health, further reading suggestions and references.

I have read some of the other Oxford Handbooks Series titles, and I suspect this would certainly rank among the better ones. It would be of interest to trainees and practitioners of reproductive medicine and family planning, students and general practitioners.

Reviewed by **Obinna Mba**, MBBS, DFRSH
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Caring for Muslim Patients (2nd edn). Aziz Sheikh and Abdul Rashid Gatrads (eds). Oxford, UK: Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1-85-775812-2. Price: £24.95. Pages: 158 (paperback)

This book provides an excellent account of very practical and common issues from the perspective of a Muslim patient encountered daily in primary and secondary care.

The early chapters discuss the human condition in the context of Islam with special reference to health issues around cooking and cleanliness. The concept of religious ethic in decision-making and the fact that Muslims will firmly believe in Allah being the supreme healer is highlighted in this book.

Same-sex clinicians, dress code, contraception, fasting and other religious concerns are all discussed, giving valuable insight into what clinicians need to be aware of when managing Muslim patients. All this is set against the backdrop of a very informative account of diversity within British Muslims and the early economic migration from different continents that shaped subsequent distribution of the 2 million or so Muslims in the UK today.

Transcultural perspectives around birth rituals, bereavement, circumcision and organ donation are discussed in line with the expectations of Muslim patients.

The chapter on the Muslim patient is particularly useful as it addresses a lot of day-to-day yet somewhat controversial issues around which many Muslims may have preconceived religious or cultural beliefs (e.g. gender segregation, intermarriage and elderly care). The topics of marriage and the family unit and its central role in Islamic society are elaborated well. Religious ceremonies and issues around prayer and Hajj are also discussed in an informative way. This will certainly provide all those who read this book with much-needed information on understanding this substantive group of patients.

The book should help bridge the gap and thus improve trust and understanding between patients and health care professionals. It also provides useful evidence from the 2001 census, which clearly showed the health inequalities suffered by the Muslim population. This is linked to poor housing and education in these areas.

I thoroughly recommend that all health professionals take time to educate themselves by reading this book.

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Caring for Hindu Patients (2nd edn). Diviash Thakrar, Rasamandala Das, Aziz Sheikh (eds). Oxford, UK: Radcliffe Publishing Ltd, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1-85-775598-5. Price: £24.95. Pages: 142 (paperback)

Hindus form a significant proportion of the ethnic minority society in Britain today. Health care professionals in all settings and locations need an awareness of their beliefs and cultural expectations, to communicate effectively and provide care in an appropriate manner. This book provides that information in a concise and practical form. It gives a brief overview of the way of life that is now called 'Hinduism'. The first section of the book describes issues relating to language, dress, diet and festivals, as well as traditions and customs that form an integral part of Hindus living anywhere in the world. The second section deals with issues relating to health care. Chapter 5 (marriage and family life) is the most important chapter for clinicians working in sexual and reproductive health since it focuses on marriage, family structure, sex, contraception, abortion, infertility and adoption.

The book illustrates different health care-related situations where tradition and beliefs have an impact not just on how care is delivered but also how it is received and integrated within daily life. It includes case studies to bring to the reader's attention the health-related significance of the topic being discussed. There is also a chapter on death, which enhances the reader's understanding of Hindu approaches to death, to help medical and nursing staff offer care sensitive to the needs of Hindu patients – needs that extend well beyond the immediate and the physical, and encompass longer-term emotional and spiritual requirements. The appendix includes a chapter detailing a variety of websites relating to Hindu practices and traditions and a chapter on diet and weight loss for vegetarian Hindus. This book will help clinicians understand their patients better and therefore become better partners in their health care too.

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