

BOOK REVIEW

Sexually Transmitted Infections: The Facts (3rd edn)

David Barlow. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0-199-59565-5. Price: £12.99. Pages: 152 (paperback)

This book is short and sweet – it keeps to the facts and doesn't burden the reader with unnecessary detail. In 152 pages it covers everything one would see in a routine genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinic setting. Although the book seems to be intended for clients attending such a clinic, its language is rather too complex for the general population. It is more likely to be of benefit to medical students and clinicians in general practice or those

just beginning to attend GUM clinics for additional experience. There is of course a host of e-learning now available that includes sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV basics. I feel this book complements them very well.

The topics covered include STIs and an explanation of test results, vaginal discharge, gonorrhoea, genital herpes, warts, syphilis, hepatitis, tropical infections, non-specific genital infections and, finally, HIV. There is a very useful chapter on understanding test results and what sensitivity and specificity mean. It also clarifies what screening tests do and how to interpret their results. This is by far my favourite chapter.

Of course much detail is sacrificed in order to keep the book succinct, but this adds to its charm. I like to carry it

around with me and dip into it often in between patients. There are of course some minor omissions and inconsistencies [like using the term intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) instead of intrauterine device (IUD)] but they don't interfere with getting the best out of the book for daily practice. I would certainly recommend this book to those who would like a quick and practical approach to seeing clients attending with genitourinary symptoms that are likely to be STIs.

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