

BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEW

Women's Health in Primary Care

Anne Connolly and Amanda Britton (eds). ISBN-13: 978-1-316-50992-0. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Price: £49.99. Pages: 270 (paperback).

I rather arrogantly didn't think I'd learn anything new by reading this book. But I was surprised. I've been working as a general practitioner (GP) for 20 or more years and I see women as patients every day – what could have changed without me noticing? Well actually quite a few things as it turned out. Not the basic female anatomy obviously – but some of the things I'd taken for granted have – and it's been quite an interesting eye-opener.

A wide range of topics are covered in the book by short, reader-friendly chapters, and include case scenarios which will be recognised by anyone working in women's healthcare. They include contraception choices and management, postnatal care in primary care, and managing menopause in primary care. In fact most of the chapter headings include the word 'management', emphasising the practical nature of this book.

I've now learnt more about who and when I should be referring women for bone density scans. I was about to go to my own GP to request one as a baseline record of where I'm at now – perimenopausal but without risk factors – and yet

here I was reading that I was one of the 'worried well' who really doesn't need a scan at this stage, and indeed shouldn't be referred for one.

Conversely, I read that a symptom I (like many women) have casually been putting up with, namely the likely effect of estrogen depletion on my urogenital tract, is under-reported and really doesn't have to be tolerated. So I will be proactively asking about it and offering a remedy where appropriate.

But occasionally I came across something in this book that I do find women consult me about fairly often – itching in pregnancy – and I was thrown into the realms of the rare and wonderful diagnoses beloved of hospital specialists. While I know why and how to test for these, what I really wanted to know more about was how to manage the symptom in my own consulting room. Sadly I could find nothing in this book to help me there.

And then there was the discovery that I didn't know what I didn't know. And the appropriate management of recurrent abacterial cystitis is not what I have been doing. That brought a slight blush to my cheeks. So from now on I will be asking the local laboratory for culture to specifically identify atypical organisms.

This book made for an excellent read. It has an approachable style, a sense that the authors are all jobbing doctors and nurses, and its level of engagement with the issues thrown up by women in primary care was for the most part spot

on. I'm glad that I volunteered to review this book, and that I didn't dismiss it as a potential good read by just flicking through it. I'm happy to report that my practice may alter a little, but for the most part I found myself to be comfortably familiar with the material, which is reassuring. However, I suspect most of us who are so long in the tooth wouldn't usually go to a textbook to find the answers we might want. And I'm even more sure that younger trainee health professionals might be much more likely to look for information online. However, as a quick reference source on the desk, I'd recommend this book to anyone working in women's healthcare.

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