BOOK REVIEWS

Opinions on recent titles

Title: Management of the menopause. The handbook of the British Menopause Society
Editors: Margaret Rees, David W Purdie
ISBN number: 0953622800
Cost: £12.00
Reviewed by: Ruzva K Bhathena, FR COG, MD, MFFP
Consultant, Petit Parsee General and Masina Hospitals, Bombay, India

This book, made available through the British Menopause Society, is meant to serve as a practical guide to the management of the menopause. The authors, who have acknowledged the help of more than 30 experts in the field, have most carefully prepared a compact (78 pages) but comprehensive, unbiased book on the subject. Besides cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and Alzheimer’s disease, the major issues of hormonal, non-hormonal and alternative therapies are reviewed in depth, as are the risks of venous thromboembolic disease and cancers of the breast and endometrium, and counselling. Contraceptive options in the perimenopausal years are also considered. Finally, there is an extensive bibliography.

Overall, the objectives laid out by the authors in the foreword are well met. An index at the end would have been helpful to facilitate rapid retrieval from a ready source of a wealth of largely evidence-based information. This well written handbook would be of immense use to health care professionals concerned with menopausal women.

Title: Key advances in the effective management of contraception
Authors: J Ferguson, M Upsdell
Publisher: Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd
ISBN number: 18531542229
Cost: £12.95
Reviewed by: Deborah Beere, MBBS, DRCPath, MFFP
Consultant in Contraception and Reproductive Health, Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trust, UK

This book is another in the Key Advances series based on a symposium held at the Royal Society of Medicine in January 1999. It provides a useful review of current knowledge on various subjects relevant to healthcare professionals involved in the provision of contraceptive services.

The first chapter gives a historical review of contraception through the ages. Then the current situation is presented, including factors influencing choice of method, in particular the effects of the media and variations of clinical practice. The need for accurate information for both providers and consumers is highlighted. Subsequent chapters cover the provision of services and prescribing trends in primary care and the provision of specialist services.

The second half of the book focuses mainly on specific contraceptive methods. The chapter on hormonal contraception reviews recently published studies and their clinical relevance to the management of women using hormonal contraception. The chapter on emergency contraception discusses the relative merits of the methods currently in use. There is a review of non-hormonal methods and their important role in the prevention of unplanned pregnancy. Barrier methods are highlighted for their additional protection against STIs and their use as an adjunct to hormonal methods is advocated. There are chapters on risk communication, patient communication and reasons for contraceptive failure.

The book concludes with a view into the future, seeking ideal, reversible, contraceptive methods in the new millennium.

In summary, the book provides the reader with food for thought on some challenges in the effective management of contraception today.

Title: Surgery in the surgery
Authors: Sidha Sambandan
Publisher: Radcliffe Medical Press
ISBN number: 1-85775-284-8
Cost: £29.95
Reviewed by: Phillipa Vincent,
GP Registrar, Winchester, Hampshire, UK

Sidha Sambandan has written the ideal textbook on minor surgery for GPs - a clear, extremely readable and entertaining guide. It is very well laid-out and is as useful for quick reference as for an in-depth read. From his discussion of the legal aspects to his detailed description of techniques and clinical conditions, Sidha Sambandan brings clarity to a subject which can seem full of pitfalls - and manages to do so with humour. The use of pertinent quotes, diagrams, charts and web-sites makes this book an invaluable resource for any GP practice.

Title: Sexual health promotion in general practice
Authors: Hilary Curtis, Tony Hoolaghan, Carey Jewitt
Publisher: Radcliffe Medical Press
ISBN number: 1-85775-1310
Cost: £17.95
Reviewed by: A Dutta
GP and Clinical Governance Lead, PCG Sunderland West, UK

‘Sexual health promotion’ conveys very different meanings to different people. The authors point out in the first chapter that family planning and sexual health services are an integral part of primary care, and this seems to be the key theme to this book. There are several attractive features of this publication, and each chapter clarifies the pathway of care in an easy to understand format.

The salient points are boxed and marked with bullet points. The language used gives simplicity and clarity to the
subject in a way that would appeal to medical students, primary care physicians and doctors working in family planning clinics. The authors’ approach remains coherent and deserves a well-merited recommendation for the practice library.

Candidates who intend to undertake the DRCOG or MFFP examinations will find this book to be a handy read.

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<td>Reviewed by:</td>
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Reproductive healthcare and family planning services for women in African, Asian and Latin American countries have been of increasing interest to European readers, health professionals and service managers and planners alike. Under the auspices of the Danish Family Planning Association, five Danish journalists and an anthropologist visited eight countries and wrote of their experiences in this book concisely and in an informative and readable style.

Two chapters are devoted to the success of family planning services in India and Indonesia. Six chapters cover the progress, or lack of it, in women’s reproductive healthcare in Brazil, Burkina Faso, Nicaragua, Uganda, Vietnam and Zimbabwe. Although devoid of any references, the text is liberally peppered with pictures, tables and summaries of key points.

The chapter on Burkina Faso (formerly called Upper Volta) in West Africa testifies that poverty, ignorance and disease, which have a cause and effect relationship, can be overcome by persistent campaigning. Three major changes have occurred:

- In 1996 the parliament outlawed female circumcision or genital mutilation in culmination of a 15-year long campaign.
- Abortions have been made legal, providing that three doctors sign to confirm that the mother’s life is in danger.
- Family planning services are acceptable to Muslims and Animists (believers in sacred animals and plants), which make up 50% and 32% of the population, respectively. Nevertheless, Catholics (18% of the population) remain unconvinced.

Other chapters are equally thought-provoking and make this book essential reading for family planning doctors, nurses, administrators and services planners of the thinking kind.