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## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Hot Flush Diary: Take Control of Your Menopause.** Susan Kelsey, Russell Kelsey. Worcester, UK: Susan Russell Publishing, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-955-63090-3. Price: £14.99. Pages: 272 (hardback)

It's a sobering thought that in the UK nearly 10 million women are perimenopausal or postmenopausal. With the gathering suspicion that I might very soon be joining their ranks (since the average woman will encounter the menopause at the age of 51 years) and, as the saying goes: "forewarned is forearmed", I embarked on the task of reviewing *The Hot Flush Diary* with a mixture of emotions.

The diary starts with a section of (necessarily brief) background information on the (peri)menopause, covering topics such as common symptoms, conventional and alternative therapies, risks associated with HRT use, dietary factors, and the importance of talking to family and friends about how you feel (which, for many, is still a taboo subject). Whilst this section of the diary is useful, many women will wish to supplement the information it contains by reading some of the many books available on this topic and/or by referring to websites such as [www.menopausematters.co.uk](http://www.menopausematters.co.uk).

Detailed instructions on how to use the diary are followed by pages on which key life events, diet, exercise, interventions and emotions are documented on a week-by-week basis, and a pull-out chart on which various symptoms (eg, bleeding, hot flushes, night sweats, etc.) are recorded daily, which together form a

comprehensive record of 12 months in the life of a peri(menopausal) woman.

The diary is attractively designed, discreet, and easy to use. Whether a woman would buy or use *The Hot Flush Diary* does of course depend on whether the idea of keeping such a diary appeals to the individual concerned. If completed diligently, this diary will allow a woman to track the myriad symptoms of her peri(menopause) and, should she subsequently wish to seek advice from a health professional, the visual record of key symptoms may facilitate a diagnosis and subsequent treatment plan. Another perceived benefit offered by this diary for some users will be the means of gaining some measure of control during a life phase that many women find irksome and (in some cases) distressing.

Sales of *The Hot Flush Diary* should be good, not just because of the size of the potential market, but also because typically the menopause can last from 2–5 years and so keen diarists may well wish to purchase multiple copies!

Reviewed by **Janie Foote**, BSc  
Editorial Manager, *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care*

**The First Moon Diary: Taking Control of Your First Menstrual Cycles.** Susan Kelsey, Russell Kelsey. Worcester, UK: Susan Russell Publishing, 2007. ISBN-13: 978-0-955-63091-0. Price: £14.99. Pages: 272 (hardback)

This is one of a range of symptom-monitoring diaries designed to "help patients take control of

their medical symptoms". This particular diary is aimed at girls just starting their periods.

The diary consists of 40 pages of information and advice followed by over 200 pages of structured diary for recording emotions, plans, exercise, diet, life events and menstrual bleeding. The information section has reasonably sensible, accessible sections on the various trials and tribulations of puberty.

I shared this book with a young teenager who felt that overall it was informative and could be very useful to some people. Advice on healthy eating just repeated what she's learnt "every year at school" and rather put her off. Some of the information about sanitary protection and vaginal discharges was dismissed as "sick" and she also felt people might worry that all the "bad things" would happen to them.

My first (selfish) feeling was weariness at the thought of a 13-year-old entering my consulting room with 200 pages of completed *First Moon Diary* entries. One wonders how sensible it is to encourage girls to focus and ruminate on normal physiological changes.

Overall, I agree with my teenage friend that much of the information was superfluous for most teenagers but that the principle was good and a few youngsters would find it helpful. I just hope they do not feel the need to share their completed diaries with me.

Reviewed by **Kate Weaver**, MBChB, MFSRH  
Staff Grade Doctor, *Dean Terrace Family Planning Clinic, Edinburgh, UK*