BOOK REVIEWS


This book is aimed at the layperson who wants information about contraception. It focuses on ‘pill’ methods of contraception but has an overview of all methods. The chapters on religious and ethical issues and the law. The chapters that focus on the combined pill and the emergency contraceptive pill are informative, and the ‘Myths or Facts’ section helps to answer many common questions. The chapter on the law gives clear information about consent and confidentiality issues. There is a good list of organisations and websites at the back of the book including Brook, Contraception Education, the FPA, R U Thinking and Teenage Health Freak. However, the language used is complex, and many long words are used, so it would take someone with good literacy to be able to read the book. The book is text only with no illustrations or cartoons, making it less appealing to a younger audience.

There are some factual errors, the most serious of which is the sentence saying condoms are ineffective if used with non-oil-based lubricants. This could clearly cause confusion and even pregnancy. An IUCD is described as meaning intrauterine coil device and it is stated that an IUD remains in the cervical canal. The implant’s mode of action is said to be by thickening the mucus and thinning the lining of the womb – no mention is made of it stopping ovulation. There is inaccurate information on how to start the progestogen-only pill and it is stated that women will bleed every month with this method. The first paragraph in the ‘Religious and Ethical Issues’ chapter lacks grammar and this chapter proceeds to declare that “it is a fact that modern British girls are much more promiscuous than ever before”. This is a judgmental statement that could alienate some readers, who are presumably picking up the book in order to help them be responsible about their own choices.

In conclusion, this book covers some useful topics but the inaccuracies suggest that other books may be more suitable. I’m sure that there are books out there that cover the subject matter in a more reader-friendly way.

Reviewed by Emily Gwinnell, MRCGP, DFSRH, Staff Grade Doctor in Contraceptive, Reproductive Healthcare, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Kettering, UK


This book sets out with the honourable intention of providing sexually transmitted infections and their treatment. Each chapter has a section on talking to teenagers. There is advice on how alcohol impacts on decision making, information and a list of useful organisations and websites. The ‘question and answer’ format employed in the book is clear and easy to follow.

I have very serious reservations about this publication. First, it contains many factual inaccuracies, for example, errors in the description of primary syphilis and advice that OTC products for warts can be used in the genital area. The author asserts that “AIDS is ultimately fatal”, which is no longer the case. The author also recommends that the majority of women treated for clamydia have a test of cure as “not only will this put your mind at rest but it will also let you know if your partner received treatment.” This is not necessary and potentially misleading.

Other problems include information that, whilst accurate, is inappropriate for this publication. For example, the author expends three paragraphs describing vaginal estradiol cream and its mode of action in a single paragraph and then refers to it as a ‘natural’ gel for the treatment of menopause. She also states that the ‘natural’ gel is much easier to remember. The book is informative, and the ‘Myths or Facts’ section is relevant to proper pill taking in an informative yet conversational style that clients will enjoy reading. Having said that, it makes for pretty good reading for professionals too, and because it is in a question and answer format the advice is much easier to remember.

This book is divided into four parts. The first part deals with choosing the pill for contraception and all the reasons why it is one of the best methods available. The second part deals with safety issues to consider before and after commencing pill taking. The third part deals with actual pill taking and common questions or difficulties that clients have when taking it. The final section introduces the reader to progestogen-only pills, emergency hormonal contraception and the male pill.

This book is well written, concise and very useful for clients. As a GP, I have found this book to be a very good reading for professionals too, and because it is in a question and answer format the advice is much easier to remember.

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