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 other 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 seem 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 IUUDC is described as meaning intrauterine coil device and it is stated that an IUDC 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 progesterone-only pill and it is stated that women will bleed continuously as there is no mention of how to use it properly.

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, Specialist in 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, informed consent 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 the use of alkali in the mouth for chlamydia 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 necessarily true.

Other problems include information that, whilst accurate, is inappropriate for this publication. For example, the author expends three paragraphs on local stricture and its management by urography and urethroplasty, which is alarming, as is her discussion on the various histological types of penile cancer. There is very little information on how genital warts. She omits to mention that the HPV subtypes causing common external genital warts are not the oncogenic subtypes. Her general readers do not need to know how a Gram stain is performed in a GUM clinic. These problems may reflect the fact that the author has no medical training.

A second criticism is the use of language by the author. Her sentences can be long and repetitive but more alarming is her use of judgemental words such as “shockingly”, “unfortunately” and “worryingly” when describing medical procedures. She states that the phrase “those of you who indulge in oral sex” is clearly condonatory. She describes children being “contaminated” by HIV during pregnancy or birth. The overall tone implies more danger than there really is. This extends to the cover photograph, which doesn’t appear to be in keeping with the title of the book.

I would like Journal readers to be aware of this book as some of our patients may read it. We should consider redirecting them instead to the excellent Speakeasy: Talking with Your Children About Growing Up which was reviewed in the October 2009 issue of the Journal.

Reviewed by Clare Payne, FSRH Associate Specialist in Reproductive Health Care, North Devon, UK


As someone who has had their own brush with CIN3, I am always on the lookout for good books that are comprehensive, compassionate and easy to read. This book, like others by the same author, is very easy to read and assimilate. It covers all the topics relevant to proper pill taking in an informative yet conversational style that clients will enjoy reading. Having said that, it is a very 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 the progesterogen-only pills, emergency hormonal contraception and the male pill.

This book is well written, concise and very useful for all clients. Apart from a few typographical errors, the content is up to date and easy to understand. It would be useful in a clinic library where it could be used to explain pill-related problems and solutions to clients in the ‘question and answer’ format that the author uses.

Reviewed by Neelima Deshpande, FRCOG, MFSRH, Consultant in Reproductive Healthcare, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, Birmingham, UK


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