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 methods to avoid repetition of 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 ‘unusual’ 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 IUCD resides 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 how an IUCD resides or the lining of the womb changes. The title of the book reflects – and the introduction, opening chapter and much of the succeeding text confirms – the book’s focus is cervical cancer. But we know well that many patients need support all the way before a cancer diagnosis; the very thought of having a smear test, let alone receiving the results, can trigger even the most resourceful woman into confusion, embarrassment and fear. The result is that many don’t go for the test, or fail to respond to call-back. And I believe that this book misses a chance here.

I am not, of course, suggesting that the work should have missed even one word of its coverage of cervical cancer. But differently titled and slightly differently focused, it could have addressed the issues of those women not suffering from cancer – even those who have never had a positive smear – but who need information and encouragement in order to engage with the system and keep it engaged. It could have presented the whole process of ‘prevention – test – treatment’ as a vital and reassuring component of regular female health care, rather than re-emphasising the worst, yet unlikely, outcome.

In short, I love this book. But I do hope that the fullest possible target market will not be missed, and I have serious reservations about the book’s focus so far to benefit from its superbly comprehensive and compassionate approach.

Reviewed by Susan Quilliam, BA, MNLP, Freelance Writer, Broadcaster and Agony Aunt, Cambridge, UK


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’s a pretty good reading for professionals too, and because it is in a ‘question and answer’ format the advice is much easier to remember.

The 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 progesterogen-only pills, emergency hormonal contraception and the male pill.

This book is well written, concise and very useful for clients. Author John Guillebaud is pretty good at checking 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, MBChB, MFSSR Obstetric and Gynaecological Registrar, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, Birmingham, UK

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