
This book is aimed at cancer specialists. It is narrowly focused on cancer and does not cover gynaecological issues. Indeed, the opening chapter and much of the succeeding text confirms – and the introduction, opening chapter and much of the succeeding text confirms – the book’s focus is cervical cancer. But we know well that all patients need support and 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 more promiscuous than ever before”. This is a judgmental statement that was reviewed in the *J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care*. For further information and about the book, visit the FSRH website or contact the Journal Editorial Office at journal@fsrh.org.

Some factual errors, the most serious of which is the sentence saying condoms are 98% effective if used with non-oil-based lubricants. This clearly cannot cause confusion and even pregnancy. An IUCD is described as being intrauterine coil device and it is stated that an IUCD rests 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 condoms will 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, Specialist in Reproductive Healthcare, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Kettering, UK


This book sets out with the honourable intention of providing an easily transmitted infections and their treatment. Each chapter has a section on talking to teenagers. There is advice on how alcohol impacts on decision making, interventions 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 those treated 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 sexual reactions as a result of an IUCD. The chapter proceeds to declare that “it is a fact that the main body of the IUCD remains in the cervical canal.” The implication is that the IUCD is in the correct position and the very thing we need to be sure of in the FSRH guidelines. The book misses a chance here.

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

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 so 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 because it is aimed at cancer specialists. This book has missed a chance here.

Reviewed by Neelima Deshpande, MRCOG, DFSRH, Specialist in Reproductive Healthcare, Heart of Birmingham Teaching Primary Care Trust, Birmingham, UK


As someone who has had their own brush with CIN3, I am always on the lookout for good books aimed at those who want to inform and empower themselves around the issue of smear tests, positive smears and cervical cancer. So I am delighted at this new addition to a currently under-resourced field.

Three adjectives describe the book: compassionate, comprehensive, cancer-focused. Let’s take these one by one.

Compassion shines through in every word of this work – unsurprisingly, for the author is Mary Lunnen, herself a cervical cancer survivor and someone who clearly knows the rollercoaster of reactions a diagnosis triggers. Thankfully, and unusually – even the current NHS call-back system can be pretty distressing for patients – 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 would like regarding redirecting them instead to the excellent Speakeasy: Talking with Your Children About Growing Up that was reviewed in the October 2009 issue of the Journal.

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


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This book is well written, concise and very useful for both clients and healthcare professionals. However, there are 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 Susan Quilliam, BA, MNLMP, Freelance Writer, Broadcaster and Agony Aunt, Cambridge, UK

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