

The Vulva

A Clinician's Practical Handbook

Gayle Fischer
Jennifer Bradford

Australia: Family
Planning NSW, 2010

ISBN 1877026 17 4
\$60.00

This is an excellent book. The first two pages succinctly discuss the emotional impact of years of poorly diagnosed vulval symptoms, and reflect on the paucity of reliable evidence based studies to guide practitioners.

This book is compact, the text easy to read, colour is used well as headings and for making points of emphasis and the general tone is honest, conversational and collegial. Technical terms are used when appropriate but do not dominate the style, and issues are discussed to a level relevant in general practice. Where more detailed histology and treatments are necessary, advice for specialist referral is given. There is colour coding down the long edge of the pages which allows quick access to individual chapters.

The initial chapter on 'the basics' of anatomy,



including innervation, history and examination, investigation and patient categorisation is very useful.

Chapter names are very practical: red rashes, things that look white, ulcerations, lumps (benign and malignant) and pain. Each chapter has summary comments that are practical, very helpful and based on years of clinical practice.

One unfortunate aspect of this book is the small size and sometimes poor quality and detail of the photographs. This does emphasise though, that often signs in vulval diseases are subtle. A clinician is not likely to miss gross anatomical pathology of classical and advanced cases of the various dermatoses and infections.

There is a specific chapter on vulval conditions in children that includes detailed discussion of the fears of possible sexual abuse and the medical dilemmas inherent in basing claims of abuse on the various physical findings of vulval dermatoses. There is a brief discussion on the implications of diagnosing a sexually transmitted infection in a child and the reader is advised to seek specialist paediatric advice. We are also reminded that prepubertal children do not get candidiasis, and that environmental factors are a key to symptom relief (eg. cessation

of bubble baths, avoidance of nylon gear for gym and ballet).

Vulval conditions often present as multiple diagnoses concurrently or over a period of time, and are usually multisystem. One of the biggest problems can be in determining which is the driving factor of the symptoms. For example, is burning with intercourse a problem arising from subtle candida infection with or without dermatitis, or in conjunction with a pain syndrome, or only the pain syndrome? As the authors say, sometimes only a trial of antifungal (oral preferred to avoid contact irritation) and/or mild steroid for 6 weeks will determine this.

The final section of myths and pearls is concise, although a couple of the myths I would dispute. The valuable pearls include discussion of when a biopsy is appropriate and how to do one, and discussion of topical steroid use and what to do if medication stings. There are also very useful algorithms and reading lists.

In summary, this is a really useful and honest handbook. The authors clearly are dedicated to their patients and have real empathy in their work.

Karen Berzins
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The upside of down: A personal journey and toolkit to overcome depression

Tamra Mercieca

Australia: Griffin
Press, 2009

ISBN 978 064 6516 660
\$29.99

The upside of down book is subtitled 'a personal journey and toolkit' and I could not think of a better title for this book.

It describes Tamra Mercieca's 5 year journey in overcoming depression. The author does not state that such a journey can be done quickly or easily. Rather, she describes how with diligence and trial and error a person can understand their own depression and find ways which, in combination, can turn the depression around.



This is an excellent book detailing many useful topics that a busy GP does not have time to cover with a patient in short consultations.

The upside of down: A personal journey and toolkit to overcome depression is 260 pages long and it consists of five sections; introduction, mind, body, soul and moving forward. Each section has multiple subsections. For example, the section on body has 10 components covering topics such as omega-3, mood food, keeping hydrated, soaking up the sun and acupuncture. The subsection on antidepressants expresses concerns with the use of antidepressants: 'anti-life' is the phrase included in the subtitle for this subsection.

There is a great deal of personal detail about the author's journey and also a number of case studies throughout. Case studies often demonstrate hopefulness and change.

The exercises described in this book are very practical but it would be hard for a GP to quickly locate relevant exercises for a particular patient.

The upside of down: A personal journey and toolkit to overcome depression would complement professional handouts and it contains many useful suggestions made by the author for those suffering from depression. This is a book that GPs might consider recommending as reading material to a patient suffering from chronic depression.

Denise Charman
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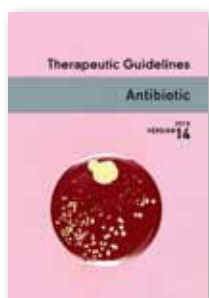
Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic, Version 14

Therapeutic Guidelines

Victoria: Therapeutic Guidelines, 2010

ISBN 978 0980 476 477
\$39.00

Every time 'Therapeutic Guidelines' is revised we should be grateful that such a resource is available to Australian GPs. I have spent 3 years working in an Asian country where antibiotics are available from every corner drug store. While trekking in a remote Himalayan village, my wife was offered a tablet of ciprofloxacin for her headache. Doctors often prescribe indiscriminately. Australia is not drowning in antibiotics to the same extent but the discovery of the 'New Delhi gene', NDM-1, has sent shivers through the medical world. Might antibiotics become useless within 10 years as some have predicted?



The latest edition of Therapeutic Guidelines is an evidence based tool in the fight against inappropriate prescribing. The introduction carefully outlines the independence of the writing group, free from any sponsorship by pharmaceutical companies and government. It's also just a great help to a busy GP.

Although this book is sold as a guide to prescribing, it contains much information that can be used for learning and updating. The first two chapters outline principles of prescribing antibiotics and give an overview of antibiotic classes. A third, new chapter discusses antibiotic allergy. It gives valuable advice on managing the patient giving a history of 'penicillin allergy'.

I can only mention a few highlights from the other chapters on specific conditions. The chapters on respiratory infection are very relevant and have been simplified. There are clear guidelines on assessing pneumonia severity and empirical treatment of inpatients and outpatients. Rational treatment of sore throat and upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) is also described. It is encouraging

that amoxicillin and penicillin-V are both still listed as first line drugs when needed. Corticosteroids are recommended as adjunctive treatment in severe pharyngitis/tonsillitis. There has been worldwide excitement and confusion over influenza management since the previous edition in 2006. This is addressed by an expanded section on the use of neuraminidase inhibitors, stressing the need for risk categorisation.

In other systems, there is good news in the section on urinary tract infection – drugs such as trimethoprim and cephalexin are still first line options. In many countries they have been abandoned for the quinolones. There is clear advice on skin and soft tissue infections, from uncomplicated cellulitis to human bites and infections in diabetic patients. Sections on HIV, malaria and mycobacterial infections have all been helpfully updated. Many GPs don't need to be convinced of the benefits of this book. Just get one for your practice!

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Herbs and Natural Supplements

An evidence based guide, 3rd edition

Lesley Braun
Marc Cohen

Australia: Churchill Livingstone, 2010

ISBN 978 0729 539 104
\$95.00

I have had the pleasure of watching this book grow in research content and depth for the past three editions as a reviewer. The third edition in both hard copy and e-book offers the reader an extremely comprehensive and evidence based guide to natural supplements and herbs.

A doctor can use this resource to check both the usage and safety of data of 130 herbs and supplements. It includes the pregnancy and lactating safety data and usage and offers the reader a comprehensive look at all the usages of the herbs and supplements, so that a reader can continue to grow their knowledge as they peruse the book.

Whether the doctor has a special interest in



this area or not, this book has become the must have textbook for herbal and natural supplements in recent years. In this modern era of medicine, where over 50% of patients are taking some form of complementary medicine, it is our obligation to have the safety and efficacy data close at hand. This eliminates ignorance by the treating doctor who may not have formal knowledge in this area. Ignorance can be harmful to rapport, can alienate the patients from their medical providers and become for some people a reason to lose faith in their doctors. This area of medicine is bursting with evidence that requires our attention if we are to grow as a profession.

The new edition of this book has a multitude of introductory chapters on areas such as function foods, the concept of complementary medicine and integrative medicine to name a few. These chapters allow the uninitiated the chance to understand the broad concepts of this intriguing and useful area of medicine. In addition to this, there is a large amount of safety information regarding dispensing, herb and drug interaction, and safety data for vulnerable

patients such as those undergoing surgery. The appendices house many useful charts to see at a glance; safety data, herb and drug interactions and herb and supplement clinical usage. There is also a particular section dedicated to cancer treatment. As many of us will be aware of the extensive usage of complementary medicine in cancer sufferers, as good practitioners we want to keep our patients safe as well as offering every bit of hope and help we can during difficult times.

The e-book version is easy to install and provides a digital version of this book. The contents can therefore be searched easily, book marked for later usage, create custom folders and make notes. The monographs are in alphabetical order and contain all the detail including the references.

The authors, Lesley Braun and Marc Cohen, have put together a comprehensive, well written and extensively researched resource that is easy to navigate and has the power to enhance any practitioners work.

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