

Guidelines are great to inform decision making. If they are used as a substitute for decision making we risk great harm.

*Ben Gray, GP*

#### References

1. Hong J, Kerse N, Scahill S, Moyes S, Chen C, Peri K, et al. Use of aspirin and statins for cardiovascular risk reduction in New Zealand: the residential care story. *J Primary Health Care*. 2009;1(3):184–189.
2. Mangin D, Sweeney K, Heath I. Preventive health care in elderly people needs rethinking. *BMJ*. 2007;335(7614):285–7.

#### IN A 100-WORD REPLY:\*

We welcome Drs Gray, Hudson and A/P Mangin's comments and agree, an important finding is the high use of medications in this frail population.<sup>1</sup>

The main finding remains, however, that there is large variability in prescribing. Prevention in older age is about reducing morbidity rather than mortality. Management of CVD may prevent progression of vascular dementia,<sup>2,3</sup> and most cases of dementia are mixed. We pose the question 'Why should there be such variability in medication use?' Our study does not answer this question but rather gives evidence that it should be posed.

Please continue the debate.

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#### References

1. Hong J, Kerse N, Scahill S, Moyes S, Chen C, Peri K, et al. Use of aspirin and statins for cardiovascular risk reduction in New Zealand: the residential care story. *J Primary Health Care*. 2009;1(3):184–189.
2. Courville K, Lavie C, Milani R. Lipid-lowering therapy for elderly patients at risk for coronary events and stroke. *Am Heart Hosp J*. 2005;3(4):256–62.
3. Nelson M, Reid C, Ames D, Beilin L, Donnan G, Gibbs P et al. Feasibility of conducting a primary prevention trial of low-dose aspirin for major adverse cardiovascular events in older people in Australia: results from the ASPirin in Reducing Events in the Elderly (ASPREE) pilot study. *Med J Aust*. 2008;189(2):105–9.

\* Prerogative of the Editor; authors lobby for a longer right of rebuttal

# Healthy Bastards

by Dave Baldwin

Reviewed by Dr Lannes Johnson, Clinical Director Harbour Health

**M**y first impression from the title and skimming the illustrations and text, was, 'Oh dear!' However any negativity was rapidly dispelled and, although I am favourably biased towards any effort that improves men's health, I have to say now, that this book a great read and a 'must' for any family that contains, or intends to contain, human males of any age.

Baldwin, an experienced GP and pilot (Bulls Flying Doctor Service) has self-published the book as an 'accessible guide for the everyday Kiwi bloke'. His use of humour makes for an easy read and assists in getting pertinent points across; most GPs do use humour to ease communications, and in a way this book is no different although more outlandish. The blokish Gav McAvedy character, alias you the reader, by projection makes pertinent points personal. The illustrations contain more humour than anatomical detail but do give light relief and 'display' the body's organs under discussion.

The use of paragraph captions highlights important points, for example in chapter 2 on hypertension, 'high blood pressure will bugger your heart'; 'high blood pressure will bugger your brain' and 'high blood pressure will bugger lots of other things too'.

Each of the chapters begins with a half-page key points summary—excellent in itself. I found in general the clinical content is more than adequate for each subject, although I was disappointed

that Baldwin did not enlighten blokes more on the main gender-specific cancer; prostate cancer was afforded only one page of 13 in the chapter, 'Gav's prostate gland, pecker failure and infections of the privates'. The concluding topic, Chapter 13, 'A section on sheilas', will be, I am sure, very useful for blokes of all descriptions, especially young blokes. Possibly a chapter on adolescent and young blokes' health will be included in the next edition?

The index and bibliography ('commonly used terms bandied around by brainy bastards') are basic but comprehensive for the general reader. An omission, important in this internet-based age, is the complete lack of useful reference websites. These could be included at the conclusion of each chapter.

There are several strong messages men and boys will gain from reading this book; the value of a healthy lifestyle, an understanding of important symptoms, and the invitation to see your GP before it is too late. All actions begin with a conversation and, if the conversation Dr Dave has begun results in more NZ men having comprehensive health checks and dealing with their health issues, the country will be improved in respect of both health and productivity. I would encourage GPs to recommend this book to their patients.

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