

## Global HIV/AIDS Medicine

Editors: Paul A. Volberding, Merle A. Sande, Joep Lange and Warner Greene

Associate Editor: Joel Gallant

Saunders Elsevier, New York (2008)

Paperback, 830 pages, including index

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This comprehensive text is the reincarnation of a book to which many of us have referred, *'The Medical Management of AIDS'*. This first edition of *Global HIV/AIDS Medicine* extends the focus, as its title suggests, by addressing not only state of the art medical care for those with HIV infection in the developed world but also the global challenges of the HIV epidemic.

The editors are from what I would describe as the top shelf of experts in the field and are all well known to all those taking care of patients with HIV infection. Sadly, Merle Sande, one of the editors, died in November 2007 aged 68 years, as a result of multiple myeloma. An infectious diseases physician, a friend and a colleague, he has been described as 'an impatient visionary' and an 'AIDS pioneer'. He was Chief of Medical Services at San Francisco General Hospital from the early 1980s when the HIV epidemic took hold and among many other contributions established with his colleagues the principles of 'universal precautions' that were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1983.

*Global HIV/AIDS Medicine* comprises 71 chapters and ~800 pages, and is divided into six sections, covering the epidemiology and biology of HIV infection, prevention, diagnosis and treatment, management of diseases associated with HIV infection, prevention and management in both resource-rich as well as resource-limited settings, and the economic and social consequences of the HIV epidemic. There is a section of ~20 chapters dealing solely with prevention and management of HIV infection in resource limited settings, which addresses problems associated with malnutrition, challenges and logistics of making antiretroviral therapy affordable and available, the impact of malaria and HIV co-infection and pharmacoeconomics of providing treatment in these settings. I would have liked to see a chapter dealing with algorithms for clinical management of patients with HIV infection in resource limited settings who present with e.g. neurologic symptoms and signs, or respiratory infections or diarrhoea. Although there was a chapter on diarrhoea, with a simplified approach for management, it did not provide an algorithm that led to a treatment recommendation that could be used by a clinician with limited experience.

The book contains a large amount of practical information such as advice given in the chapter on the HIV-infected traveller which includes vaccination recommendations, a check list of what to take with you when travelling, useful resources for travellers etc. Similarly the chapter on women and HIV infection is also practical and useful, containing tables that remind clinicians of important primary care issues for women, differences in CD4 and viral load results in women compared to men, etc.

A big advantage of this book is that the editors (Paul Volberding, Joep Lange, Merle Sande and Warner Greene) have sufficient clout to have been able to draw together a cadre of highly respected physicians and scientists from around the world as authors, including Donald Abrams, Elly Katabira, Dick Chaisson, Bruce Walker, Julio Montaner, John Bartlett, the Greenspan duo of Deborah and John, Mark Wainberg, David Cooper, Steve Deeks, Kevin de Cock and Kate Hankins. This has resulted in many instances with the world expert of a subject being the author of that chapter. Another advantage is that the book is attractively presented and information is provided concisely in many chapters in useful tables and figures. However, when reading the section on new HIV drug development, which includes drugs such as efavirine and raltegravir (using earlier nomenclature) I noted the references ceased at 2005. This prompted me to check other chapters, e.g. on immune reconstitution and hepatitis, where the most recent references were from 2006 and vaginal microbicides where the most recent references were from 2005. This creates a concern for me as the field is rapidly moving and too much has changed during the time it has taken for publication of the book in 2008.

The book would appear to me to be aimed at an audience of clinicians treating patients with HIV infection rather than students. I think it is likely it will appear on the shelf of all hospital infectious diseases units and primary care clinicians who treat HIV infection.

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## The New Joy of Sex

Alex Comfort and Susan Quilliam

Mitchell Beazley, London (2008)

Paperback, 288 pages, including index

ISBN 978 1 84533 429 1

Sexology (the specialist study of sexual matters) has come a long way since the first edition of this book was published in 1972. Alex Comfort's aim in the first publication in 1972 was to provide the lay reader accurate information on sexuality and grant them permission to use this in their own lives. Set in a time when the women's liberation was a new event with the recent emergence of the contraceptive pill, and cohabitation, easily available erotica and gay rights were emerging issues in the sexual landscape, the book was in its time a ground breaking effort to offer 'sexual bibliotherapy' to the masses; and stimulate creative imagination. Measured by book sales, it did in all probability achieve this goal!

The 2008 edition of the book is written for a mature lay audience. It does, however, provide fascinating titbits for professionals in the field. The author of the revised version (in her words) attempts to 'to recreate *The Joy of Sex* for the contemporary world'. The 2008 version maintains the strongly sex-positive theme established in the original, while reframing it on the premise that, driven by an information explosion and technological advances, intimacy and sexual behaviour have changed radically since that time and that many sexual concerns of today were unrecognised in 1972. The author is a relationship psychologist well known in the UK as a writer, scientist and therapist, and the expansion of sections on body modification, sex toys and alternate behaviours, as well as the theme through the book that women can be as sensual as men and just as capable as initiating sex, is refreshing. Another important advance is the author's ability to keep the blend of biological with the emotional and social aspects of sex in the original version and interweave recent research on the science of desire, arousal and bonding in a manner understandable to the lay reader. New research in sexology is well integrated in the text (e.g. the work done by anatomist Helen O'Connell on clitoral structure and the role of brain hormones oxytocin and prolactin in couple bonding).

The array of sexual advice is impressive and sometimes somewhat daunting. The use of peacock feathers, big toes and tongue baths, birdsong orgasms (where you make as much noise as you wish) and the 15 possible positions for sexual intercourse (graphically illustrated) could be either extremely interesting to an adventurous couple, or excessively threatening to the more conservative. The book, however, is an excellent conversation tool for a couple who want to maximise their sex lives and sexual experience.

Medical advice and safe sex messages are cleverly interspersed within information on sexual behaviour (e.g. vaginal care, breast examination, condom use and signs of sexually transmissible infections). Even more important are the inclusions of the sections on 'health', which explores the issues of chronic illness and disability in a sex-positive light, as well as sex in older adults, with the timely warning for safe sex

in the postmenopausal age group; and the excellent section on 'safe sex', which recognises changing sexual mores and practices with a frank discussion on condom use and sexually transmissible infections. For a sex therapist looking at the Permission, Limited Information, Specific Suggestions, and Intensive Therapy (PLISSIT) management model, the book is useful for the permission granting, limited information and specific suggestion stages. While hinting at the 'little blue pill', it does not provide guidelines or advice for intensive therapy; but then, that is not the intention of the book.

Sexual dysfunctions, while not attributed a special section, have been interspersed within the text. This, while frustrating for sexologists who are used to indexes with specific search terms, is probably a far more informative structure for the lay reader. The content is conveyed in a light-hearted and non-threatening way (e.g. the discussion of premature ejaculation comes under the heading 'hair trigger trouble'; vaginismus is discussed in the section on 'penetration' and erectile dysfunction is discussed under the heading of 'performance'). Whereas some sexologists would cringe at this location for erectile dysfunction, the section on performance commences with the myth buster that 'the conventional male fantasy of being able to perform anytime anywhere is totally unrealistic' and goes on to report on recent statistics and management of erectile dysfunction.

On the negative side, there are a few features of the book that make it somewhat cumbersome to read and to use as a bibliotherapy tool. The information is structured as a cookbook; moving from a simple meal to a gourmet experience with a movement from ingredients through to sauces and pickles. This is set in the analogy of an orchestral approach to the plethora of sexual experiences. While interesting, this structure could become tiring after a while. This becomes even more complex when an automotive theme is overlaid (e.g. 'All lovers will want to know what's under the bonnet to make the car purr more sweetly' – and before you get too excited, this refers to the hormonal drive of desire and bonding). I feel that this structure was more applicable in 1972 than it is for today's readers. Further, the use of French terms, while interesting, will make this a difficult read for the non-Francophile lay reader (e.g. the natural pheromone scent titled 'cassolette'; or the sexual positions of 'flanquette' and 'cuissade').

Although the graphics throughout the book are both educational and informative (as well as great for sex therapists to use in couple sessions), the range of photographs of a perfect young couple in various stages of undress and sexual behaviour (especially in colour at the beginning of the book) seem redundant except for their erotic potential for the lay reader. A more conservative couple or even sex therapist might be uncomfortable to use this book as

bibliotherapy for this reason. The same information and message could have been transmitted without this bit of titillation.

As a long standing sex educator, researcher and therapist, I have learned new snippets from this book, including the use of ear lobe manipulation and the big toe as a tool for full sexual satisfaction and orgasm. I would recommend it as a useful

bibliotherapy tool for couples who want to be imaginative and creative in their lovemaking.

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## **Making Sense of AIDS: Culture, Sexuality, and Power in Melanesia**

Edited by Leslie Butt and Richard Eves  
University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu (2008)  
Paperback, 320 pages, including index  
ISBN 978-0-8248-3249-0

Melanesia has provided endless experiences both exotic and erotic for adventurers and material for anthropologists ever since this part of the Pacific was revealed to the wider world. Including Margaret Mead, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Gilbert Herdt, Melanesian cultures have had their sexuality examined and reported on. This book aims to make sense of culture, sexuality and power as it relates to HIV in Melanesia. This is some undertaking considering Melanesia is home to myriad language groups extending from the island of New Guinea in the west, Fiji in the east, New Caledonia in the south, and Nauru and Kiribati in the north.

While the island of New Guinea has been affected the most by HIV to date, the remaining island nations of Melanesia have small numbers of cases relative to other countries, leading some commentators to talk about a Melanesian style HIV epidemic; meaning that Melanesia has an HIV epidemic pattern that is neither Sub-Saharan African nor Asian. Evidence from bio-behavioural surveys as well as behavioural surveillance has shown that HIV is found in the usual vulnerable populations of female sex workers, men who have sex with men, male to female transgender, men working in the transport sector, injecting drug users, and those with multiple sexual partners. Debate among public health professionals continues as to whether the island of New Guinea is experiencing a generalised epidemic or a large concentrated epidemic.

*Making Sense of AIDS* is a collection of essays from 12 female and three male anthropologists who have performed field work in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, West Papua, and from the four regions of Papua Niugini: Southern, Momase, Highlands, and Islands. With the exception of the contributions from the applied anthropologists, the essays are mostly opinion pieces from the author's fieldwork using ethnographic research to provide insights into the sexual and health causality belief systems of some of the cultures in Melanesia as it applies to the manifestations of HIV.

Although many of the chapters focus on Melanesian cultural linkages of sex with the negative and fearsome subjects, such as sorcery, rape, abuse, death, sin, judgment, mortality, degeneracy, faith healings etc, the Trobriand Islands are a beacon of light where sex and the erotic are celebrated. What is missing in this book is more research on what is 'sexy' in Melanesian contexts, what is erotic, or what women and men want or expect from their different sexual encounters. The

continuance in the practice of 'bride price' and the price of sex or selling of sex are not unrelated and are worthy of anthropological exploration in the context of the epidemics of sexually transmissible infections and HIV.

I would point readers to Holly Buchanan-Aruwafu and Rose Maebiru's chapter "Smoke and Fire: Desire and Secrecy" for its anthropological application of behavioural survey data. Kathy Lapanis' chapter "Fitting Condoms on Culture" and Maggie Cummings chapter "The Trouble with Trousers" contrast the differences across Melanesia between permissiveness and prudery.

While the editors and reviewers tout for a wider audience, the book will most appeal to anthropologists and social scientists with an interest in Melanesia and for whom social science jargon is their second language. The content is interesting and mostly useful, but the deciphering the language is somewhat distracting. It may disappoint sexual health clinicians, public health professionals or policy-makers expecting new insights into belief systems behind sexual behaviours in order to design and implement effective programs, but it does make for some disturbing reading for those who have an interest in the diversity that is human sexual behaviour and belief systems. The editorial is critical of much of the current responses to HIV in Melanesia (with some good reason) but fails to put forward viable alternatives or suggestions for what needs to improve and how.

While it is not the intention of the book, it does not make use of available epidemiological evidence, such as the 2006 World Bank and Family Health International bio-behavioural survey of West Papua, or the biannual sentinel behavioural surveillance from Papua New Guinea. This is unfortunate as these are rich sources of data which need to be mined in order to more clearly understand what the drivers of the epidemic are in the largest island in Melanesia.

All in all, a disparate collection of pieces that are individually interesting and provide some anthropological perspectives to some of the factors that impact on the HIV epidemic in Melanesia, but despite the editors' attempts, it is difficult to see how they all combine to make sense of AIDS in this neglected part of the Asia-Pacific.

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