

Contraception: an Australian Clinical Practice Handbook, 2nd Edition

Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia

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The first edition of this book came into being in 2006. At last we had a handbook for the Australian scene and it was very popular. While texts from overseas contained valuable information they often fell down when superimposed on Australia's regulatory system and the differences that can exist between the States and Territories. The first edition was not a comprehensive textbook on contraceptive technology but it was a practical, clinically oriented handbook for the practitioner working with patients.

The second edition has built on this groundwork. It has expanded by some 70 pages to 223 pages, lost its spiral binding, adopted a larger font size and has an easier to read format. The two additional chapters, 'Contraceptive choices in special circumstances' and 'Emergency contraception' were in the first edition but as parts of other chapters. The importance of the information in these chapters justifies their inclusion as separate chapters. The World Health Organization (WHO) Medical Eligibility Criteria (MEC) tables have been updated to include information from the UK Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use (UKMEC) of the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Easy-to-read summary tables of categories of contraindications are included in each chapter for each contraceptive method with Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) differences listed as appropriate.

Chapter 1 is 'Introduction to methods of contraception'. This is worthwhile reading even for old players in the field. It contains several useful website links and a clear discussion on explaining efficacy. It highlights the importance of timing in the starting of contraception and ensuring that the patient is not already pregnant and will not become pregnant just after starting a new contraceptive method. The useful summary table of contraceptive methods available in Australia has survived into the second edition but it is no longer in the easy to photocopy one-page format.

The outstanding chapter in this book is the new chapter 2, 'Contraceptive choices in special circumstances'. It covers a wide range of issues from dealing with women under 18 to women over 40, post-partum women, women with medical conditions such as venous thromboembolism, migraine, cancer, diabetes, HIV and then has a section on drug interactions. The chapter gives clear guidance on ability to consent as well as noting the importance of involving parents or guardians where appropriate and raises the issue of mandatory reporting. The four pages devoted to drug interactions are clear and concise and form a valuable reference tool, especially the list of antiepileptic drugs that do and do not affect hormonal contraception.

Chapters 3 to 8 work through the various contraceptive methods with each chapter following the format of definition, efficacy, advantages, disadvantages, contraindications, important aspects of history, examination and investigations, management of side-effects, management of special situations and method failure.

'Barrier methods' has been updated to include information on latex versus polyurethane condoms. Details for the direct supply of the female condom have not survived into the second edition.

'Natural methods of contraception' is the title for chapter 4. Five different forms of fertility awareness are described; however, the Two Day method and checking for cervical changes are not mentioned. A contact has been added for the Natural Family Planning Program; however, I find the www.fertilityuk.org site more useful for patient information and for downloading blank recording sheets. The widespread practice of withdrawal is acknowledged but there are no tips for the clinician to pass on to the couple choosing this method to help them improve its reliability.

'Hormonal Methods' is the largest chapter covering 48 pages. The section on management of side-effects and management of special situations for combined oral contraceptives has some excellent advice. The one-page format of the guidelines for missed pills can be photocopied for easy desk reference. The combined vaginal ring has arrived in Australia since the first edition and is now included in this chapter. There is a note about continuous use of the ring. The progestogen-only pill is well covered with helpful instructions on timing of the dose and a discussion of the dose required in obese women. There is an excellent discussion on depot medroxyprogesterone acetate (DMPA) and bone density. There is also a clear section on follow up of the woman late for her next injection. The section on etonogestrel implants emphasizes the need to exclude pregnancy before inserting the device. The management of side-effects is especially useful.

'Emergency contraception' (EC) has its own chapter in this edition and covers the use of hormonal EC and the copper intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUD). The differences in the WHO/UKMEC contraindication tables and the TGA product information make for interesting reading. There are simple instructions for increasing the dose of hormonal EC in women using liver enzyme inducing drugs.

The 'Intrauterine contraceptive devices' chapter has been updated to cover the new copper IUD. This chapter puts to rest many misconceptions about IUDs including use in nulliparous women, risk of infertility and risk of ectopic pregnancy. Again there is a useful section on the management of complications.

The last method to be discussed is sterilisation. This chapter covers procedures for both female and male sterilization. The list of issues to cover prior to consent makes a useful check list for anyone presenting requesting sterilisation. Hysteroscopic sterilization is described using the Essure™ device however other devices have now become available.

Chapter 9 covers other contraceptive technologies not available in Australia. There is a useful website for the names and composition of most hormonal contraceptives from overseas.

Chapter 10 contains the UKMEC summary tables for the common reversible methods of contraception. These tables are an incredibly useful resource for looking up contraindications.

The index is comprehensive and well cross referenced making it easy to find an answer to almost any problem.

This is not a text on contraceptive technology. It does not go into detail about the composition of the contraceptive method or the mechanism of action. However it lives up to its title – a clinical practice handbook. This is a book for clinicians whose work covers the area of family planning. This would include

general practitioners, sexual health physicians, family planning doctors, nurse practitioners, obstetricians and gynaecologists, adolescent health doctors and doctors in training. The book has handy tips and well thought out tables that will be referred to time and time again.

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