

## Sexual Health Medicine (Second Edition)

Edited by Darren Russell, David Bradford,

and Christopher Fairley

IP Communications (2011), A\$95

548 pages, including index; ISBN 978-0-9808649-1-5

This delightful book was a pleasure to read. With 39 chapters and 44 contributors it breezes along at a cracking pace. Obviously chapters are short and punchy, focusing on the absolute importance of the section, covering the essentials, but not going into tiny print, and emphasising the critical points for general physicians. The style is generally entertaining with contributors feeling free to express their personal views and you can almost hear some of them having a conversation with you; the style is so familiar. The first chapter by Christopher Fairley, 'Priorities in Sexual Health', is a perfect example, where he is commenting on the consequences of HIV infection. As soon as I read this I knew I would like the book, '... but there are some stunningly cost-effective measures that have prevented many millions of unnecessary infections. One of these is embodied in the proactive harm-reduction approach that involves programs such as widespread and accessible needle exchange. Tragically, some countries with extraordinary wealth have had their public health policies influenced by far-right ideological views that prevent them from implementing proven, highly cost-effective and life-saving interventions. Their citizens are paying a high price for this ideology.' He could have been talking about my own Republic of Ireland where, in the early days, needle exchange was seen as condoning immoral behaviour and therefore not appropriate.

In another section, Fairley discusses relationship issues, 'divorce rates for example are as high as 50% and are accompanied by considerable distress, etc. No amount of money or individual success can replace the happiness derived from a successful long-term relationship... At some point in time I expect society will see the value in formal early tuition about how to obtain and sustain successful long-term

relationships.' I couldn't agree more. I often say to colleagues that the only thing likely to put me out of a job is decent sex and relationship education in schools. I expect to be in work for a long time to come yet.

Although this book is not meant to be an in-depth text, it covers practically everything to do with sexual health, including excellent chapters on anatomy and physiology, sexual response, history taking, epidemiology, and of course detailed chapters on all of the infections. There are also comprehensive chapters on contraception, abortion, cervical cytology, adolescent health, sexual assault, transgender issues and an illuminating chapter on sex workers with a personal reflection. In this chapter the laconic style of Basil Donovan and co-authors is obvious in the comment in the section on prohibition, and I quote, 'These laws are primarily motivated by moral considerations. Such laws bring with them immense potential for corruption, payments to police or other authorities, not to prosecute. Such potential is usually realised.' You do get the feel of personal and passionate commitment to the speciality from all the authors.

Laboratory aspects are extensively covered and the short chapter on HIV, natural history and treatment, is fascinating and contains a really good explanation of Western blot technique and how to explain the occasional false-positive.

There are 46 colour plates, well-taken images and diagrams which are all relevant and enhance the experience.

It was a pleasure to review this 548 page book. It is easy reading for both the generalist and the specialist. Well done.

Colm O'Mahony

Countess of Chester Foundation Trust Hospital  
United Kingdom