BOOK REVIEWS

Sexuality and fertility issues in ill health and disability: from early adolescence to adulthood

Edited by Rachel Balen and Marilyn Crawshaw.
Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, UK,
2006, £25.00 (paperback), pp 304. ISBN 1-84310-339-7

"Let's talk about sex baby, let's talk about you and me; let's talk about all the good things ..." sang Salt and Pepper in 1991. But it's not just a pop group named after condoms that talk about sex. Everything from teen magazines to beer adverts does, such that *everyone* seems "at it"! However, society avoids discussing people

whose "normal" sexual and fertile experiences are obscured because of chronic illness or treatment. They are marginalised into a taboo niche. This book is unique in addressing, and thus legitimising, these experiences and so empowering those affected.

The book's transatlantic, transprofessional authorship adds a rich mixture of knowledge and practical experience. The text is well indexed and, with 27 pages of references, grounded in research and theory. The book opens with a clear outline and who it is focused for—caregivers, professionals, family and friends (disappointingly it misses the usefulness it could provide for the people it describes).

The book starts by recognising early adolescence as a time of great flux mentally, emotionally and physically for all youngsters regardless of health. It acknowledges how sex, fertility and parenting develop on young people's agendas while the experience of illness is an additional dimension some have to contend with.

The book's second part has a four-pronged approach tackling medical, scientific, legal and ethical aspects of sexuality and fertility for young people with ill health and disability. This is rather medicalised but very comprehensive. Particularly interesting are chapters on egg and sperm preservation and fertility restoration. They would equip those counselling young people on the methods and chances of conception.

The third part focuses on research of ill young people's personal experiences of sexuality and fertility. An excellent chapter actually addresses this issue in the context of black and ethnic minorities (albeit only one page is devoted to developing successful fertility services).

The book's last section is written by young people and their parents affected by illness. These chapters provide insight into their "worldview" although their brevity makes them seem an afterthought.

The whole book is littered with an excellent wealth of qualitative data addressing areas such as: childbearing and fertility being the main concern for some rather than sex per se; contending with the implications of genetic conditions while only a teenager; rationalising that for some becoming a parent means adoption; coping with disease recurrence after having children and the associated ramifications.

A few example vignettes include one infertile man who hence thought he had no need for condoms but did not appreciate their protection against STIs. Another expresses anger at having to have invasive fertility treatments because of previous chemotherapy. Doctors do not escape comment. It was embarrassing to read of a 12 year old girl who needed repeated vaginal dilation, whose doctor never explained to her why.

It was good that the book covered topics like polycystic ovarian syndrome, Turner's syndrome, cystic fibrosis, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, HIV and post chemotherapy that probably do not automatically spring to mind when thinking about disabilities. However, my main criticism is that it left out those with learning disabilities. Though this is a heterogeneous group, some have a sufficient IQ to explore their sexuality even if their IQ might compromise parenting. (Perhaps this was too controversial to tackle!)

Overall, I recommend this book even in spite of my criticisms. The chapters are well written and so complete that they can be dipped into any time. Acquiring a copy will go some way to addressing another issue raised by it—that some paediatricians feel uncomfortable talking about sex and fertility with their patients. This book will enable people to instead say, *"Let's talk about sex"*!

S Haroon

Human malformations and related anomalies, second edition

Edited by Roger E Stevenson and Judith G Hall.
Published by Oxford University Press, Oxford,
2005, £180.00 (hardback), pp 1495. ISBN 0-19-516568-3

Although the title of this book, *Human malformations and related anomalies*, sounds familiar, in fact it is quite original. There are many books exploring areas of "genetic" and "congenital" human body abnormalities, but those resources addressing

the anatomical perspective of human defects are actually few.

It is a real textbook with nearly 1500 pages of pure, concentrated and concise information, covering the enormously broad spectrum of human malformations.

With 44 contributors (all but one from North America), who belong to eminent institutes, one would expect a very comprehensive standard of core information, and indeed it is. Through their preface, which mainly briefs developments in the field over a decade (since the previous edition), the authors could push the "warming-up" reader to a very "hot" start.

Considering the anatomical perspective of the book, the divisions and subdivisions of the text to chapters based on various body systems is quite reasonable. I've been really surprised by the quantitative variety of malformations that might affect organs, such as the tongue and the umbilical cord. I have to say that the most valuable parts of this book are the first chapter, which included nomenclature, classification, aetiologies, in addition to management, and the

index of tables of malformations and associated syndromes which is a precious reference treasure for any paediatrician. I would have been equally impressed with the first chapter only if there were more detailed discussions of the issue of counselling the parents.

Adequate use of the current imaging technology is obvious in more than illustrations to support the text. Well presented examples include the electron micrographs showing the embryology of the spleen and that of the external genitalia. Yet, the absence of a single coloured picture in a 2006 second edition of a textbook of human malformations is a defect in my opinion. Despite the richness of the first part with figures, graphs, flow charts, and pedigrees, many of the following parts are very poor in such illustrations—a deficiency which makes the dense text boring, brain-tiring, hard to understand, and imperfectly presented, especially in areas with complicated genetic aspects.

As in any textbook written by a number of experts who belong to different schools and subspecialties, there is an expected inevitable variability in the style, clarity, simplicity/complexity, organisation, and order of writing. In spite of my preference to unify at least the side titles of each chapter and their order, I appreciate the need for some freedom. Yet, I must mention that I enjoyed most the simpler, more organised and precise chapters. Of special note in this aspect I will memorise the chapters discussing malformations of the heart, skull, ear, nose and limbs.

In short, despite the imperfection in some ways—especially as regards the presentation of information—I consider this book a distinctively valuable resource on the shelf of any neonatal unit for the generosity of its core information.

Y A H Negm

Management of disorders of bladder and bowel control in childhood

Edited by A von Gontard and T Neveus.
Published by Cambridge University Press,
Cambridge, 2006. £65.00 (US \$115.00) (hardback) pp 355. ISBN 189868345X

I love poos and wees, so you can imagine the difficulty I had controlling my own bowel and bladder during the time I was waiting for this book to arrive. I must confess to some degree of professional competitiveness, which made me want to find fault with it wherever I looked.

I have to report mixed success—I did remain continent, just, but the book itself is actually a bit of a treasure trove.

It is difficult to imagine a better-researched volume. It explores all aspects of bladder and bowel physiology and pathology and discusses the management of these problems in a sensible and humane way. The text is detailed but very readable and although it describes some fairly eye-watering investigations and treatments, it does emphasise that these are rarely needed.

As healthcare professionals, we underestimate the impact that these conditions have on children and their families. They really do take