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BOOK REVIEW

The Essentials of Contraceptive Technology

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Ready access to good quality care is important for the success of family planning and reproductive health services. Family planning is increasingly being seen as a human right and is being accepted all over the world.

This book is intended for program managers, clinic staff, trainees and providers of family planning services. The book starts with a description of how to use it! The chapters follow a standard sequence which makes it easy for the reader. Each chapter starts with 'Key points' followed by a 'Table of contents'. The sections are 'Introduction', 'Deciding about the method', 'Starting the method', 'Following up', 'Important information for the user to remember' and 'Questions and answers'. Decision tables are present throughout.

The second chapter describes how family planning helps everyone including Mother Earth. Considering the growing impact of the increasing population on our planet, the point is a very valid one. The third chapter concentrates on counseling. 'Treat each client well', 'interact', 'tailor information to the client', 'avoid too much information', 'provide the method that the client wants' and 'help the client to understand and remember', are the six principles of counseling. These have been summarized

under the mnemonic 'GATHER'. 'G' stands for Greet clients in an open, respectful manner, 'A' for Ask clients about themselves, 'T' for Tell clients about choices, 'H' for Help clients make an informed choice, 'E' for Explain fully how to use the chosen method and 'R' for Return visits should be welcomed.

The fourth chapter talks about different methods of family planning, information on who can provide the services and where it can be provided. The signs of pregnancy and family planning for the breast feeding woman are important issues. Preventing infections and choosing a suitable method of contraception depending on the medical condition of the patient is important.

The first method to be described is the low dose combined oral contraceptive which is the most commonly used one. I found the medical eligibility checklist to be very useful. We use this book while teaching undergraduate medical students on how to choose a particular contraceptive method for a patient and how to counsel patients regarding the use of the contraceptive. The book is written in simple language and provides clear and easy instructions. The question and answer section covers information on the most common problems about a particular method which a patient is likely to have.

Chapter six describes progestin-only contraceptives and how they are different from the combined pills. DMPA injectable contraceptives, norplant implants, female sterilization, vasectomy, condoms, intrauterine devices, vaginal methods, fertility awareness methods and methods of

lactational amenorrhoea are described. The pages within each chapter are numbered with the chapter number and the page number.

The last chapter describes sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS. The regimens for the treatment of common STDs have been described. The appendix lists the WHO medical eligibility criteria for starting contraceptive methods. There is a detailed list of suggested reading and a glossary of important terms. The thumb index for quickly accessing information is useful. In our institution, we have been using the book to teach undergraduate medical students as already described for over five years and have found it extremely useful and informative! As family physicians and general medicine practitioners play an important role in the delivery of contraceptive and family planning services, the book will be of special interest to them. Gynecologists and reproductive health specialists will also find the book useful.

About The Book

Hatcher RA, Reinhart W, Blackburn R, Geller JS. The essentials of contraceptive technology. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Population Information Program, 1997. ISBN: 1-885960-01-8.