



### Alternative Therapies for Cancer and Arthritis

Earl Weisenburger and Irvin Boichuk. 144 pp. Oolichan Books, PO Box 10, Lantzville BC V0R 2H0. 1996. \$14.95. ISBN 0-88982-154-2

**Overall rating:** Good  
**Strengths:** Brief, affordable and easy-to-read overview  
**Weaknesses:** Some references and inventory of arthritis remedies incomplete; some statements not referenced  
**Audience:** Interesting and useful for health care professionals; easily understood by patients and the public

Because patients are increasingly turning to alternative therapies, physicians need an understanding of the purported benefits and risks of these therapies. This small paperback provides an introduction to a range of alternative therapies for cancer, with a few references to folk remedies for arthritis. The authors have arranged alternative treatment methods into chemical, dietary, herbal and miscellaneous therapies as well as therapies provided at single-site clinics. They promise to present the information in a nonjudgemental fashion. For each treatment they outline the claims for and against it. In most instances, the claims for the treatment consist of anecdotes and improbable explanations of mechanisms. The claims against the treatment consist of a mixture of results of scientifically rigorous studies, anecdotes and opinions. This book can be easily understood by readers with no medical background, as the authors intended.

In some respects, the book is more entertaining than informative. For example, several of the described alternative therapies are no longer available, and most of the references are more than 10 years old. In fact,

the lack of complete and accurate references is a hindrance to readers who wish to review the evidence for and against alternative therapies in more detail. Many statements are unreferenced, and some references are incomplete or incorrect. The authors have made no attempt to assess the scientific rigour of the evidence critically. Material from newspaper articles and obscure, non-peer-reviewed sources is presented in much the same way as articles from the most prestigious peer-reviewed medical and science journals.

In a few instances, the authors express unsupported opinions. For example, in discussing religious cures originating in China or India, the authors state that "there are many safe and effective natural remedies prescribed by these religious followings," without examples or references. I would have liked to have seen more information on folk remedies for arthritis. The common use of copper bracelets and devil's claw were each accorded only a single sentence. The outbreak of serious toxicity caused by an impurity in the dietary supplement L-tryptophan was accorded only two unreferenced sentences, whereas the medical literature contains more than 100 articles on the outbreak.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is an affordable, easy-to-read introduction to alternative therapies. It provides physicians and patients with an overview of the amazing range of alternative therapies for which there is little or no scientifically rigorous information on safety or efficacy.

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### ABC of Major Trauma

2nd ed. Edited by David Skinner, Peter Driscoll and Richard Earlam. 146 pp. Illust. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$51.95 (\$42.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-0917-7

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Concise text with many diagrams and tables; emphasis on teaching points  
**Weaknesses:** Tries to cover too much material; section on medical problems appears out of place  
**Audience:** Emergency physicians and nurses, and residents in surgery and emergency medicine

The target audience for this book is emergency nurses and physicians as well as surgical residents and any health care personnel who care for patients with trauma in rural areas or who transport these patients to a trauma centre. The editors are consultants in accident and emergency medicine as well as general surgery.

The text follows the format of the advanced trauma life support course, with the addition of graphs, illustrations and tables to emphasize the concepts. All of the graphs, tables and photos are in colour; the photos are therefore very life-like.

There is an excellent section on preparing to treat patients with trauma as well as on the composition, roles and responsibilities of the trauma team. There is also an excellent chapter on radiography in the diagnosis of trauma, which outlines the indications for particular radiographs, their quality and interpretation.

There are separate chapters on pediatric trauma, trauma in elderly people and trauma in pregnancy. These chapters emphasize relevant clinical points that illustrate how the care of these patients may differ from that of other patients with trauma.



Other chapters focus on trauma in hostile environments and in disasters. Although these chapters are not in great depth, they demonstrate the varied sources trauma victims may come from.

This glossy-cover book presents many of the concepts put forward in the advanced trauma life support course and augments these with worthwhile information on trauma-team composition and responsibilities.

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### Managing Food Allergy and Intolerance: A Practical Guide

Janice Vickerstaff Joneja. 580 pp. McQuaid Consulting Group Inc., Vancouver. 1995 \$282.43. ISBN 1-55203-000-8

- Overall rating:** Excellent
- Strengths:** Systematic approach outlined in detail, with adequate, simple-to-follow materials
- Weaknesses:** Information is buried in the text; index needs to be extended to include more specific foods
- Audience:** Primarily dietitians but also other health care providers

When a food reaction does not cause physical manifestations such as hives and asthma, patients' complaints are often lightly dismissed. These patients often turn to alternative medicine to validate their reactions. Management of these patients in daily office practice is often a challenge. It can be time-consuming and frustrating for both the physician and the patient.

This manual is directed to health care providers who are interested in the task of detecting and eliminating

specific antagonistic foods or food additives and designing a nutritionally sound diet for patients with food allergies. It may also be useful for busy practitioners, who can provide the hand-out sections to patients who are motivated to design their own diet. The ultimate goal is to equip patients with the knowledge and tools they need to approach their problem rationally. Most chapters include a client information section designed to be photocopied for the patient.

The manual is divided into six sections. The first is an introduction to mechanisms responsible for allergy and intolerance and to the crossreactive antigens in foods. The second concerns detection of these foods, food components and additives. Section 3 deals with naturally occurring chemicals and food additives and their relevance. There is a subsequent section on allergies in children. A variety of controversial diseases, such as Crohn disease, irritable bowel syndrome, urticaria and angioedema, migraine, attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder, asthma, eczema, nocturnal enuresis and disaccharide intolerance are covered in the fifth section. The final section contains sample diets that eliminate allergenic foods as well as a list of cookbooks and other aids.

Throughout the book, scientific data have been kept to a minimum, but key references have been provided at the end of each chapter for interested readers.

This is an excellent guide for dietitians and practitioners willing to invest the time needed to guide patients through the often confusing and frustrating steps in detecting food allergens and eliminating them from the patient's diet. It can also serve as a handy reference for avoiding specific foods.

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### ABC de la maladie d'Alzheimer

Sophie Éthier. 250 pp. Éditions du Méridien, Montréal. 1996. \$22.95. ISBN 2-89415-154-3

- Évaluation générale :** Excellent
- Points forts :** La disposition des chapitres et le contenu de ceux-ci permettent à l'utilisateur de trouver l'information désirée rapidement
- Faiblesses :** Manque un chapitre qui permettrait au lecteur de situer la chronologie probable des événements dans la progression de la maladie
- Clientèle :** Soignants de patients atteints de la maladie d'Alzheimer

Ce livre se présente sous la forme d'un guide pratique pour les soignants de patients atteints de la maladie d'Alzheimer. Le livre est structuré de sorte que les chapitres sont présentés par ordre alphabétique où, par exemple, A correspond au chapitre sur l'agitation, O à celui sur les oublis et S à celui sur la sexualité. Les chapitres sont organisés en courts paragraphes regroupés sous des titres explicites de sorte que l'utilisateur peut rapidement trouver conseil concernant un problème particulier.

Les informations sont accessibles à tous et sont données sous forme de «trucs» pratiques (par ex., installer une clochette au haut de la porte pour prévenir les fugues). Des explications simples permettent à l'aidant de mieux comprendre la raison des comportements du patient. L'auteure suggère des références appropriées pour certains points qui ne sont pas traités dans l'ouvrage (par ex., les aspects juridiques). Dans les dernières pages, on trouve un lexique de termes couramment utilisés dans les échanges avec le médecin, mais qui risquent souvent d'être mal interprétés. Le livre bénéficierait d'un chapitre supplémentaire sur l'histoire naturelle de la maladie, ce qui permettrait au lecteur de situer la chronologie probable des événements dans la