



**BOOKS**

**The Healing Garden**

Marjorie Harris. 128 pp. Illust. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., New York; HarperCollins Canada Ltd., Toronto. 1996. \$16. ISBN 0-00-255432-1

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Stimulates deep thinking in a gentle way, brings to our attention a humble subject that could be a powerful source of healing  
**Weaknesses:** None  
**Audience:** Physicians and patients alike who are looking for that "something else"

Marjorie Harris is one of Canada's best known garden experts and writers. She has written *The Healing Garden* with the same imagination and skill she has brought to her well-known garden with its thousands of plants and flowers.

While reading *The Healing Garden*, you realize that you have not used your 5 senses expertly. She eloquently describes the physical healing influence of the garden that comes through the senses and through horticultural therapies.

But it is the garden's power of spiritual healing that is a pervasive theme in the book. Can we seek revelation and spiritual renewal from the garden? Does it project hope and survival? Can it restore, teach, soothe and heal our minds and souls? As profound and deep as the mystery of human consciousness is the mystery of the spiritual powers of the garden.

Physicians are scientifically trained and capable of solving the physical mysteries and problems of illnesses. Patients clearly like and trust their physicians and would want them to become more sensitive to their spiri-

tual needs and attend to the spiritual aspect of their healing as well.

The measure of this book's influence is the realization that a garden is like a "treasure chest": each one of us has one, but it may be buried out there somewhere.

Marjorie Harris and I have found ours. It is for you to go and find yours and to help others, especially your patients, to find theirs.

**Marilyn Daryawish, MD**  
Ottawa, Ont.

**The Vaccine Guide:  
Making an Informed Choice**

Randall Neustaedter. 260 pp. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, Calif. 1996. US\$14.95. ISBN 1-55643-215-1

**Overall rating:** Poor  
**Strengths:** None  
**Weaknesses:** Full of misleading information  
**Audience:** Directed at parents but should not be recommended to them

One is always hopeful that the next book for parents on vaccination will provide thoughtful, accurate and balanced advice. Despite its promising title, this book is just another antivaccination diatribe, designed to play on parents' fears.

Written by a US homeopath with unabashedly negative attitudes toward vaccination, the book is misleading right from the title page. It begins with a quotation from a leading opponent of vaccination, which suggests that immunization programs will cause a catastrophe on the scale of the decline of the Roman Empire. The book is very suspicious of physicians and vaccine manufacturers and

suggests the existence of conspiracies to reap profit at the expense of the well-being of children. It couches untruths and half-truths in factual information to enhance its credibility and presents information in a quasiscientific format to impress lay readers. Most unethically, it tries to frighten parents into putting their children at risk of disease by refusing to have them vaccinated. It asks parents whether they "are ready to inject these powerful and toxic drugs into [their] child, on the advice of drug manufacturers, [and] at the insistence of doctors who are paid by these drug companies."

In the chapter "Making an Informed Choice," the author says "that the body needs to be nurtured, not attacked with chemicals," and that "the injection of virulent neurotoxins and heavy metals into the infant's bloodstream can be avoided by simply saying no to the paediatrician." The result of vaccination is that "an entire generation has suffered immune system crippling from the vaccines that should be protecting us from illness." If parents' "informed" choice were made on the basis of this misinformation, they would never consider vaccination for their children, who would then be left vulnerable to all of the childhood illnesses and their complications.

In reviewing one of the chapters on specific vaccines, I found that every single known or alleged problem with that vaccine is detailed. For hepatitis B vaccine, the criticisms range from the rare known side effects to, strangely, criticism of the timing of the vaccine schedule. One could ask why the schedule is even mentioned if this vaccine is so harmful. The author has simply dragged out every single negative comment that has ever been made about the vaccine.



Buying this book not only wastes patients' money but also supports a very harmful movement. The sad thing is that the book is only one of many publications that undermine this valuable medical and public health tool. If you want to do your patients a favour, buy a copy of *Your Child's Best Shot: A Parent's Guide to Vaccination* to be published in the spring of 1997 by the Canadian Paediatric Society, and leave it in your waiting room.

**Ian M. Gemmill, MD**  
Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Regional Municipality  
of Ottawa-Carleton  
Member  
National Advisory Committee  
on Immunization  
Ottawa, Ont.

### Shouldn't I Be Happy? Emotional Problems of Pregnant and Postpartum Women

Shaila Misri. 340 pp. The Free Press; Simon and Schuster Inc., New York. 1995. \$31. ISBN 0-02-921405-X

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Clarity and readability; inclusion of patient stories and of sections on what to tell patients  
**Weaknesses:** Repetitious and chatty  
**Audience:** Mainly patients with emotional problems during pregnancy and post partum but also their partners, families and physicians

In the introduction to this book, Vancouver psychiatrist Dr. Shaila Misri states that her goal is to provide the helpful reading material on emotional disorders during pregnancy and post partum that patients need. She "imagined a pregnant woman entering a bookstore and looking for books on the subject because she'd

had a depression that went untreated in an earlier pregnancy and is afraid that she will have the same frightening symptoms this time." She carried this image with her as she wrote the book that this patient, and those who support or care for her, would need. She has succeeded very capably.

As a specialist in reproductive psychiatry, the author has listened carefully to her patients' many questions and concerns and answered them here. She shares her years of experience and insights gained from this exclusive clinical practice. She examines normal concerns about pregnancy and the postpartum period as well as defining and explaining more serious psychiatric illnesses.

The book is divided into 2 parts. The first describes the difficulties new mothers may experience and includes psychological problems in pregnancy, medical and obstetric complications, miscarriage, fetal abnormalities and fetal death. She discusses the spectrum of postpartum depression. Chapters on breastfeeding problems and marital conflicts after childbirth are excellent inclusions; these issues are very common and rarely discussed. The role of the father is explored with understanding. The second part includes chapters on helping the patient decide when to get help as well as on the types of therapy available, including psychotherapy, drug therapy and electroconvulsive therapy.

The information is presented clearly, in simple language that is easy for patients to understand. The book has a conversational tone; one can easily imagine the author speaking to her patients in her office. At times, the book is repetitious, but this may be useful to patients who are upset and require information to be repeated.

Patients will especially like the patients' stories in each chapter, which help validate the reader's situation. Medical problems are presented as a question that is then

answered in the subsequent section. Family physicians who treat these patients will appreciate a section entitled "What I Tell My Patients" that appears in most chapters. This section summarizes the issue and includes advice that the author has found useful and necessary to tell patients, worded simply and concisely.

Misri has achieved her goal admirably and has provided a unique resource for patients with emotional problems during pregnancy and post partum and for the family members and the family physicians who care for them. I would heartily recommend this book to them.

**Mamta Gautam, MD**  
Ottawa, Ont.

### Comprehensive Guide for the Care of Persons with HIV Disease. Module 2: Infants, Children and Youth

Edited by M.A. Tobin, F.J. Chow, M.I. Bowmer and G.A. Bally. 137 pp. College of Family Physicians of Canada, Mississauga, Ont. 1995. Free of charge. ISBN 1-896014-07-0. Available through the National AIDS Clearinghouse, Canadian Public Health Association, 400-1565 Carling Ave, Ottawa ON K1Z 8R1. Aussi disponible en français.

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Comprehensive, well organized; contains generally useful, accurate information  
**Weaknesses:** Outdated; lacks information on new antiretroviral agents and viral-load measurements  
**Audience:** Family practitioners, pediatricians, obstetricians and gynecologists, nurses, nutritionists, pharmacists, microbiologists, pathologists, public health officials and anyone who cares for children or families affected by HIV

This excellent reference is available free of charge from the College of Family Physicians of