



Legal Rights and Human Genetic Material

Edited by Bartha Maria Knoppers, Timothy Caulfield and T. Douglas Kinsella. 180 pp. Emond Montgomery Publications Limited, Toronto. 1996. Price not stated. ISBN 0-920722-86-5

Overall rating: Good
Strengths: Focuses on emerging issues of genetic testing, DNA banking
Weaknesses: Narrow audience
Audience: Geneticists; those interested in ethical, legal or social aspects of genetics

Suppose you give a blood sample for research into a disease that runs in your family, and years later DNA from the sample is used to study cancer. Your DNA is found to have a genetic variant that indicates a high risk for colon cancer. Several questions arise. Did the researcher have the right to use your DNA for the cancer study? Should you be told the new information that may, in fact, save your life? Should you have had the right to decide in advance if your DNA could be used for other studies and whether or not you wished to receive such information?

We are rapidly moving into the era of genetic medicine. The ethical, legal and social issues are significant and not easily resolved. The editors of this small but important new book on the legal aspects of genetics research are 3 of the world's experts in the field. The book derives from studies supported by the Canadian Genome Analysis and Technology (CGAT) Program — a research effort of the 3 federal granting councils, the National Cancer Institute of Canada and Industry Canada.

Topics include DNA banking, consent forms for DNA research, common and civil law status of genetic material and patent law in rela-

tion to human genetic material. The book is short and user-friendly, but quite uneven in its treatment of the subject.

One chapter reports the results of a survey to identify current practices in DNA banking and related consent forms. There were 2 surprises for me — the low proportion of institutions that actually have a policy concerning DNA banking (< 50%), and the lack of uniformity in those policies, despite a 1991 policy statement by the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists.

I found the chapter on common law status of genetic material informative and was forced to consider whether DNA should be classified as property, person or something-in-between. The law is not clear, and the author argues for the *sui generis* approach of treating DNA as neither person nor property but giving it a special status. The chapter on civil law was less informative. It deals mainly with Quebec civil law, thereby limiting the generality of the conclusions for the rest of Canada.

One section reviews laws in several countries in relation to patenting of life forms and human DNA and genes. Life forms such as genetically altered mice are patentable in many countries, but not in Canada. DNA and genes are patentable in most countries, however the breadth of claims is being restricted to commercial applications resulting from genetic information.

This short informative book will interest those in genetics and anyone with an interest in the ethical, legal and social issues arising from the Human Genome Project.

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Healers at Work: Firsthand Accounts of the Difference Alternative Healing Makes

Peter Downie. 224 pp. Illust. Northstone Publishing Inc., Kelowna, BC. 1996. \$29.95. ISBN 1-55145-080-1

Overall rating: Fair
Strengths: Easy-to-read, conversational style
Weaknesses: Lack of discussion of many major alternative healing systems
Audience: Public

When one considers the vast field of alternative medicine it is no surprise that this book is not much more than a nibble. There is some useful information here, but it is disappointing to see no mention of any of the traditional healing systems such as acupuncture, ayurveda (a traditional east Indian system), herbal therapy, homeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine or nutritional therapies.

Instead, this book is essentially a series of biographic chats with 11 remarkable people: 5 are ministers, and the others are a former priest, a music therapist, a writer, a physiotherapist, a business woman and a university chancellor. These people are all of a spiritual bent.

We are promised no gimmicks or get-well-quick schemes. We are told that healing, as distinguished from the cure of a medical condition, is about reaching an emotional, physical or spiritual equanimity with the demands and complexities of modern life in North America. This type of healing battles against what Sir Laurens Van der Post calls the modern crisis of feeling "unknown in the universe."

This is all very well, but it is reminiscent of the way in which the Freudians, in their enthusiasm for the



“inner man,” did not deign to confront physical malaise, leaving it to others to address psyche and soma, which is what one hopes true healing involves.

Throughout the book it is evident that healing is a continuing process, unique to each individual, usually requiring change of some sort, which can be facilitated by a variety of means. It is not a single event.

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On the Shoulders of Giants: Eponyms and Names in Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Thomas F. Baskett. 270 pp. Illust. Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, London, England. 1996. Price not stated. ISBN 0-902331-94-9

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Covers the enormous field remarkably well
Weaknesses: None
Audience: Anyone interested in medical history, particularly obstetricians, gynecologists, midwives and obstetric nurses

Dr. Baskett has done an exemplary job in assembling the information available in this book. He has then managed the even more difficult task of presenting it in a manner that makes it eminently readable.

The format is alphabetical, and, in most cases, photographs are presented. The eponym or work for which these giants are remembered is described, followed by biographical data, which is helpful in returning them to human size.

I see that Bassett, like myself, gets more interested in history with advancing maturity, and I should warn him that the next step is that we re-

member more and more of what our colleagues regard as history.

Two consistent points recur throughout the book:

1. With many of the eponyms there is some doubt as to which name would be most appropriately applied.
2. Humility was not a common personality trait in many of our great predecessors.

My congratulations to Dr. Baskett on a job well done.

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The Pocket Guide to Critical Appraisal: A Handbook for Health Care Professionals

Iain K. Crombie. 66 pp. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$28.95 (\$23.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-1099-X

Overall rating: Very good
Strengths: Concise, understandable, informative; reader-friendly; useful checklists
Weaknesses: Lack of references. Limited number of study types addressed: surveys, case-control and cohort studies, clinical trials and reviews
Audience: Medical students, postgraduate trainees, practising clinicians

Dr. Crombie has created a valuable and useful resource.

The pocket guide contains 2 parts. The initial 5 chapters are a general introduction to the rationale and conduct of critical appraisal. Although this section can be omitted by experienced appraisers, it effectively and efficiently addresses several important issues. It includes a discussion of the various sections of a paper and the questions that should be considered for each; a description of the

characteristics of surveys, case-control and cohort studies and clinical trials; and an overview of fundamental concepts required to interpret study results — data analysis, bias and confounding.

The concluding 6 chapters provide detailed, annotated checklists of questions to guide the critical appraisal of surveys, case-control and cohort studies, clinical trials and reviews. Examples of the questions asked: Are the aims [of the study] clearly stated? Are the measurements likely to be valid and reliable? Do the numbers add up? and What implications does the study have for your practice? The explanations of the appraisal questions are not only informative, they are written in a simple, user-friendly manner.

The book has 2 limitations, both identified by its author. First, it contains no references. This is in stark contrast to the many useful references found in an alternative resource: the “Users’ Guides to the Medical Literature” series, initiated in the Nov. 3, 1993, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The second concern is that only a limited number of study types are addressed. Scenarios such as diagnostic tests, qualitative methods and decision analyses were omitted to ensure that the book remained a simple-to-use pocket guide.

I highly recommend this book as a valuable resource to assist in the critical appraisal of the health sciences literature. It not only is useful for health sciences trainees and critical appraisal novices, but is also an easy-to-carry, valuable reference for their more experienced counterparts.

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**Books and other media
received**

**Livres et autres documents
reçus**

Books for patients

The American Pharmaceutical Association Parent's Guide to Childhood Medications. Andrea Peirce. 613 pp. Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, Mo. 1996. US\$16.95. ISBN 0-8362-2138-9

Epilepsy: 199 Answers: A Doctor Responds to His Patients' Questions. Andrew N. Wilner. 128 pp. Demos Vermande, New York. 1996. US\$19.95. ISBN 1-888799-09-9

Multiple Sclerosis: A Guide for the Newly Diagnosed. Nancy J. Holland, T. Jock Murray and Stephen C. Reingold. 128 pp. Demos Vermande Publications, New York. 1996. US\$21.95. ISBN 1-888799-06-4

Prostate Cancer: A Guide for Women and the Men They Love. Barbara Rubin Wainrib, Sandra Haber and Jack Maguire. 298 pp. Dell Publishing; Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., New York. 1996. \$14.95. ISBN 0-440-50640-9

Miscellaneous

French's Index of Differential Diagnosis. 13th ed. Edited by Ian A.D. Bouchier, Harold Ellis and Peter R. Fleming. 812 pp. Illust. Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., Oxford, England; Butterworth-Heinemann, Boston. 1996. US\$55. ISBN 0-7506-1434-X

Medical Meanings: A Glossary of Word Origins. William S. Haubrich. 253 pp. American College of Physicians, Philadelphia. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$40.95 (\$32.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-943126-56-8

Presenting Science with Impact: Presentation Skills for Scientists, Medical Researchers, and Health Care Professionals. Cindy Todoroff. 116 pp. Trifolium Books Inc., Toronto. 1997. \$16.95. ISBN 1-895579-87-2

Vaccination : Erreur médicale du siècle : Dangers et conséquences. Louis De Brouwer. 271 pp. Louise Courteau, éditrice inc., Saint-Zénon (Qué.). 1997. \$22.95. ISBN 2-89239-183-0

Neurology

Neurological Emergencies. 2nd ed. Edited by Richard A.C. Hughes. 358 pp. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$67.95 (\$56.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-1104-X

Nutrition

Preventive Nutrition: The Comprehensive Guide for Health Professionals. Edited by Adrienne Bendich and Richard J. Deckelbaum. *Nutrition and Health* series. Series editor, Adrienne Bendich. 579 pp. Humana Press, Totowa, NJ. 1997. US\$99.50. ISBN 0-89603-351-1

Obstetrics

Fetal Therapy: Invasive and Transplacental. Edited by Nicholas M. Fisk and Kenneth J. Moise, Jr. 369 pp. Illust. Cambridge University Press, New York. 1997. US\$110. ISBN 0-521-46133-2

Pediatrics

Advanced Paediatric Life Support: The Practical Approach. 2nd ed. Advanced Life Support Group. 306 pp. Illust. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$67.95 (\$56.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-1069-8

Pharmacology

Avery's Drug Treatment: A Guide to the Properties, Choice, Therapeutic Use and Economic Value of Drugs in Disease Management. 4th ed. Edited by Trevor M. Speight and Nicholas H.G. Holford. 1852 pp. Illust. Adis International Limited, Mairangi Bay, Auckland, New Zealand. 1997. Price not stated. ISBN 0-86471-036-4

Research

Best Evidence: Linking Medical Research to Practice (CD-ROM). American College of Physicians, Philadelphia. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$88.95 (\$69.95 CMA members).

Sports medicine

Management of Bloodborne Infections in Sport. Terry A. Zeigler. 90 pp. Illust. Human Kinetics, Windsor, Ont. 1997. \$26.95. ISBN -88011-682-X

Statistics

How to Report Statistics in Medicine: Annotated Guidelines for Authors, Editors, and Reviewers. Thomas A. Lang and Michelle Secic. 367 pp. Illust. American College of Physicians, Philadelphia. 1997. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$54.95 (\$43.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-943126-44-4

Writing

Medical Writing: A Prescription for Clarity. 2nd ed. Neville W. Goodman and Martin B. Edwards. 223 pp. Cambridge University Press, New York. 1997. US\$19.95. ISBN 0-521-49876-7