



## Therapeutic Choices

2nd ed. Editor-in-chief, J. Gray. 886 pp. Illust. Canadian Pharmacists Association. 1998. ISBN 0-919115-77-2

**Overall rating:** Excellent  
**Strengths:** Comprehensive; clear diagrams, algorithms and tables; easy to use  
**Weaknesses:** Unnecessary length  
**Audience:** Medical students, residents, prescribing physicians

The second edition of this popular text is more than just an update. It has 11 new topics, including chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV infection and croup. However, because of its length, it cannot be considered a quick pocket reference book.

*Therapeutic Choices* helps practitioners choose the most appropriate treatment for their patients. A wide variety of topics makes it relevant to various disciplines. A simple cost indicator is helpful when considering this aspect in the choice of medications. Each chapter is standardized under the headings of Goals of Therapy, Investigations, and Therapeutic Choices (Nonpharmacological and Pharmacological). Occasionally, this rigid approach makes for inclusion of material that is either well known or easily accessible elsewhere.

The algorithms and other diagrams and tables are excellent. The index is particularly helpful for cross-referencing trade names with approved names. This book is recommended for students and residents, and for physicians, both generalists and specialty based.

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## The Athletic Musician: a Guide to Playing Without Pain

Barbara Paull, Christine Harrison. 175 pp. Illust. Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md. 1997. US\$27. ISBN 0-8108-3356-5

**Overall rating:** Poor  
**Strengths:**

- Addresses important subject
- Appropriate for the lay reader
- Warnings for musicians not to play in pain

**Weaknesses:**

- Information and recommendations reflect authors' opinions and experience rather than an evidence-based approach to injury prevention
- Many inaccurate or misleading statements not supported by research
- Though presented as a book for all musicians, the focus is on shoulder impingement syndrome and string players
- Many common playing-related injuries are either not clearly defined or not even mentioned
- Anatomy for brass players embouchure problems is not presented
- Lack of warnings for the reader (especially the injured reader) to consult a physician, or any health professional other than an orthopedic physiotherapist before engaging in the athletic protocol, which emphasizes neck and back extension stretches

**Audience:** Musicians, especially string players with shoulder impingement syndrome

This book was written by a physiotherapist (Paull) and her violinist patient (Harrison), who began teaching injury prevention workshops after their experience with Harrison's shoulder problem. It addresses an important topic, anatomy is described clearly with simple diagrams, and the recommendations not to play in pain are appropriate.

Although this book appears to be intended for all musicians, the focus is on one type of shoulder impingement syndrome. Few other playing-related injuries are defined or even mentioned, and facial anatomy (applicable to woodwind and brass players) is not covered.

There are several inaccurate state-

ments about musicians' injuries, and much of the research on risk factors for occupational musculoskeletal disorders is either ignored or misinterpreted. The authors frequently make statements such as "study after study shows" without providing any references. No research support is provided for pronouncements such as "Never do sit-ups in any shape or form." Although the exercise protocol is presented as injury-prevention for musicians, research demonstrating its effectiveness is not evident. Similarly, in promoting their "ergonomically designed playing chair" the authors offer testimonials and state: "All that remains to be done is to persuade healthy musicians to try this [chair] and learn how to use it as a strong dose of injury-prevention medicine." The authors provide no evaluation of the effectiveness of the chair.

The few research studies that are cited suggest a biased selection rather than a comprehensive literature review. For example, according to the best prevalence studies, playing-related injuries affect approximately 43% of professional musicians;<sup>1</sup> however, the authors cite only studies reporting injury prevalence of 57% to 87%. By ignoring the methodological problems of the few cited studies as well as ignoring more rigorous studies, the authors misrepresent and overstate a problem that is significant even without exaggeration. Similarly, the authors' warning against taking anti-inflammatory medications is accompanied by statistics on hospitalization and death that were reported at one conference presentation. Their cautions to "sit as seldom as possible" are based on one 1976 study.

The authors advise readers who are injured that this book does not replace their own orthopedic physiotherapist, and readers who experi-



ence pain while performing the recommended stretches or exercises are urged to consult an orthopedic physiotherapist. However, there are no cautions for the reader (injured or uninjured) to consult a physician (or any health professional other than an orthopedic physiotherapist) before engaging in the exercise protocol. The lack of appropriate warnings and the authors' emphasis on back extension stretches are cause for concern.

Although Harrison's detailed account of her injury experience illustrates some frustrations other musicians encounter when consulting health professionals, both she and Paull make several unnecessary derogatory comments regarding diagnostic tests and treatments used by health professionals other than orthopedic physiotherapists.

In sum, this book presents the authors' opinions and experience rather than a comprehensive evidence-based approach to injury prevention.

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**Reference**

- 1. Zaza C. Playing-related musculoskeletal disorders in musicians: a systematic review of incidence and prevalence. *CMAJ* 1998;158:1019-25.

**Source Book in Bioethics: a Documentary History**

Edited by Albert R. Jonsen, Robert M. Veatch, LeRoy Walters. 510 pp. Georgetown U Pr. 1998. US\$95. ISBN 0-87840-683-2

**Overall rating:** Excellent, for US readers; good, for others  
**Strengths:** Good source of US bioethics

**Weaknesses:** and health law documents; well written historical introductions  
US audience; most documentation not necessarily applicable to Canadians  
**Audience:** Anyone with an academic interest in bioethics and health law

Jonsen, Veatch and Walters, well known and respected US bioethicists, have done an excellent job in compiling many of the pivotal documents in bioethics and health law of the last few decades. (As bioethics is a very new discipline, this really does constitute an historical approach.)

The five sections cover research on humans, death and dying, human genetics, human reproduction and the changing health care system. Each begins with an historical introduction by one of the editors, followed by documents (e.g., the well known Belmont Report).

The editors promise to "Bring[s] together in a single volume the core legislative documents, court briefs, and reports by professional organizations, public bodies, and governments around the world." Unfortunately, "the world" does not include anything north of the 49th parallel. There are only a few documents from countries other than the United States. Although the literature is interesting and informative, much of it, particularly the law, is not applicable in Canada. Indeed, relevant ethical and legal Canadian documents concerning all areas discussed in the book do exist, and these documents may be more important for Canadian readers interested in our own social policies and norms.

This is not to say that Canadians cannot benefit from the insights of these respected bioethicists and from the reproduced documents. However, particularly at \$95 (US), I do not think it will become nor do I think it ought to become "a standard text for courses in bioethics" . . . at

least not for readers outside the United States.

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**Running With the Caribou**

Pete Sarsfield. 210 pp. Turnstone Press, Winnipeg. 1997. \$16.95. ISBN 0-88801-215-2

**Overall rating:** Good  
**Strengths:** Well written, humorous, personal  
**Weaknesses:** None  
**Audience:** All medical practitioners and libraries

In *Running With the Caribou* Pete Sarsfield sketches a broad picture of his 25 years as a community health physician in northern communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Labrador and the North West Territories. Part medical log, part personal quest, part travelogue, this book takes you on a journey you will be pleased you made.

Sarsfield allows us into his Canada: the northern landscape, native peoples, friends, family, his travels, and the provision of health care in the north. One gets the sense that most of his time has been spent in an airplane, train or bus, but in many cases, getting to the frontier is the best part of the story. He has made excursions to Hong Kong, Sweden and to Nevis, where his Canadian medical training is called "destructively irrelevant" to that small nation.

His writing style is subtle, economical and elegant. He wonders about medical specialists who have "chosen to avoid most ordinary human contact by becoming unusually adept in one tiny area of people's problems." Waiting for the Pope in