

Book reviews

Exercise, Nutrition, and the Older Woman; Wellness for Women Over Fifty. Edited by M.A. Fiatarone Singh. London: CRC Press. 2000. Pp. 601. £29.99. ISBN 0 8493 0258 7

Exercise, nutrition, and the Older Woman; Wellness for Women Over Fifty is a multi-authored book, with the authors all from research institutes across the USA and Australia. It is a compilation of twenty-seven chapters that aim to cover the area of wellness in the older woman. The book seeks to provide information to the health-care practitioner on physical activity and nutrition, with an aim of promoting full integration of exercise and nutrition into the mainstream of health care. This is quite an ambitious task and an unusual academic book with regard to subject area and content. The cost is reasonable at £29.99 for 601 pages, so it could be bought by students, health-care practitioners and institutions alike.

The editor, Maria A. Fiatarone Singh, emphasizes in the preface that the book aims to provide the health-care practitioner with the principles and practice of preventive health behaviours so as to include priorities of healthy, successful ageing, enhanced by optimal fitness and good nutrition. As one reads through the book it seems that such aim may have been achieved, with the book providing a useful source of information in the basic science behind nutrition and exercise in health, and in applying such information in a variety of health-care settings. As a result, the book would provide a useful source of reference to the health-care practitioner. However, due to the book's applied nature and depth of research, it would probably not be useful to researchers who already have an in-depth knowledge of nutrition and exercise.

The contents page shows the titles of the sections and relevant chapters along with the individual page numbers. Further, at the beginning of each chapter there is a contents page outlining the relevant section headings and page numbers. This made it easy to establish exactly which section one was reading and to find specific areas of interest. The book is divided into four sections covering: (1) exercise; (2) nutrition; (3) exercise, nutrition and disease; (4) how nutrition and exercise can be integrated into wellness prescription in health-care practice. Within each of these sections the chapters are well presented and provide a clear and logical progression making reading the book both appealing and interesting. The chapters vary in depth but over all provide a comprehensive and up-to-date review of the major issues. All the chapters provide a source of references and relevant contacts for the interested reader to broaden their knowledge. This information is placed at the end of each chapter making it easy for the reader to refer to them.

Throughout the book, tables, diagrams and figures are

consistently referred to, complimenting the text and giving the reader an applied understanding of the issues being discussed. For example, in section 1 on 'Exercise', under chapter 3 'Exercise prescription' the author discusses specific exercises that could be used in the older woman, and refers to Figs 3–52 that show photographs of such exercises with the correct and incorrect positioning. The book concludes with an appendix of suggested readings, giving further sources to broaden one's knowledge base, and a subject index that allows quick access to specific subject areas.

The only negative aspect with regard to the content of the book is that it consistently refers to US data. The use of a more varied data subset from countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia would have made the discussion more applicable to a wider population. Although, the theory can still be applied in the discussion of similar problems across countries, some statistics from other countries would have made interesting comparisons of issues, whilst providing the reader with a wider data subset from which to draw conclusions.

Since women currently outlive men by 6–8 years in most countries, health-care promotion should focus more on the older woman, as with advancing decades they increasingly comprise a larger proportion of the population. However, there is a lack of research into this area, which needs to be addressed. This book begins to tackle such issues providing an interesting and comprehensive read into exercise, nutrition and health of women over 50 years. The book will undoubtedly be a very useful source of information to the health-care practitioner who is trying to integrate exercise and nutrition to promote wellness in the older woman.

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Fine Wines and Fish Oils. The Life of Hugh MacDonalld Sinclair. Jeanette Ewin. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001. Hardback. £25. Pp. 240. ISBN 0-19-262927-1

Hugh MacDonalld Sinclair (1910–90) loved the good things of life. In his working life he is best remembered for his work on dietary fats and particularly essential fatty acids. A somewhat enigmatic and eccentric character, he spent most of his academic life in Oxford. David Horrobin, who saw him almost every day for 3 years from 1963, writes in the foreword: 'I soon learned that Hugh was an extraordinary mixture of contradiction, capable of immense kindness and generosity and of brilliant intellectual insight, but with an uncanny ability to provoke sheer irrational rage in the great, the good, the virtuous and the

self-satisfied'. All these facets of the life of Hugh Sinclair are evident in this book as the author has drawn on biographical details, historical facts and the contents of many letters, which Sinclair had carefully preserved. He was also a brave man, being one of the last of the great 'self experimenters', living on a traditional Eskimo diet for 100 d. On three occasions he recorded sharp cardiac pain with pronounced cardiac arrhythmia and suffered from spontaneous haemorrhages (Widdowson, 1993). He firmly believed that human nutrition is worthy of study in its own right rather than as a branch of physiology, biochemistry or medicine.

When Hugh's parents first met, his father, an Army colonel, was 47 years old and his mother half that age. He was the third child, born after a difficult labour. From accounts kept by his mother during his childhood, Hugh was able to say that he was breast-fed for 6 months and 8 d and received successively egg in milk and chicken broth.

After Winchester School, Hugh went to Oriel College, Oxford where he obtained a First Class Honours degree in Animal Physiology in 2 years. In 1930, he began to seek membership of a London club, the Athenaeum.

Membership of such clubs defined a man's place in society and two physiologists, Sherrington and Evan, were members of that particular club. He was elected to membership in 1936. In about 1937 he began making enquiries about getting himself elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society! He had by this time qualified in medicine and had worked on thiamin under Rudolf Peters in the Department of Biochemistry and held a Senior Lectureship in Physiology in Magdalen College.

Sinclair was much influenced by Sir Robert McCarrison and Charles Sherrington. The names of others familiar to nutritionists, including Peter Meiklejohn, Edward Mellanby and Jack Drummond, occurred frequently as Sinclair's life unfolded. It was during these years that Sinclair moved with his mother, Rosalie, to 'Lady Place', in Sutton Courteney. The house was sadly destroyed by fire in 1998.

During the war, Sinclair submitted a proposition for a nutrition survey. The credibility of Rudolph Peters' department gave support to the project. It was to be centred largely on clinical observations and biochemical determinations and was to be done on volunteers under the exacting eye of Hans Krebs. The Oxford Nutrition Survey, as it was known, was absorbed into the University of Oxford and became part of an Institute of Social Medicine. There was then a turning point in Sinclair's interests, for: 'Despite signs of increasing irritation over the lack of attention to the survey work, and clear evidence that technical problems involving data were mounting', Sinclair decided to attend the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association.

After returning from the USA, Sinclair received a letter asking him to participate in a study of nutritional status in Canadian Indians. Peters questioned the trip in the light of his other commitments, but an emerging interest in dietary fat and essential fatty acids decided him to go. On his return he found that delay in the availability of food tables had caused the Oxford Nutrition Survey to grind to a halt. There was now an uneasy peace between father and son in science, Peters and Sinclair.

In 1945, Sinclair was sent first to Holland and then to Germany to carry out nutrition surveys. A grant from the Wellcome Foundation resulted in the creation of a Laboratory of Human Nutrition in Oxford in 1946. This was terminated in 1955 with a merger with the Department of Biochemistry now under Hans Krebs. By early 1956, Sinclair knew that he would not be able to continue his work in the Department of Biochemistry and began branching out on his own. With Krebs' approval he organised the first International Conference on Essential Fatty Acids in Oxford. It was about this time that Sinclair was involved in exchanges in the *Lancet* on the effects of food processing on nutritional values. Rifts continued in Oxford, culminating in Sinclair sending Krebs a six and a half page single-spaced letter recording Sinclair's version of the past. There is no record of a response to this letter. His Readership in Human Nutrition was not renewed. This is likened to him entering his scientific wilderness.

At the same time as all this was going on, Sinclair continued tutoring at Magdalen College. In 1960, Krebs asked him to lecture in nutrition for 'three guineas an hour' and in 1961 his name was on the list of members of the Faculty of Physiological Studies. Still in his mind was a plan for a National Institute of Human Nutrition. All this time Hugh's mother was alive, living at 'Lady Place'. She died in 1969. Plans had been developed for an Institute of Nutrition in the grounds of the mansion to be supported by a specially registered charity, The Association for the Study of Human Nutrition Limited.

Hugh Sinclair celebrated his 80th birthday on 4 February 1990 knowing that by this time his early ideas about the clinical importance of essential fatty acids were being taken seriously. The next day he travelled to the University of Reading to present his annual lecture on 'Methods of Research in Human Nutrition'. Here, in the presence of the MSc students, Ann Walker presented him with a shield of the university coat of arms and a kite in the form of a giant green fish. He was delighted. In May 1990, Sinclair knew he had inoperable cancer. He died in June.

So ended the life of a brilliant, brave, but enigmatic man. In some ways, it is a sad story, but it is one that I was pleased to read and I am especially pleased that Sinclair's memory is being perpetuated by the appointment of a Hugh Sinclair Professor of Human Nutrition in the University of Reading, funded by a trust of all Sinclair assets including the International Nutrition Foundation, and that a colleague, Christine Williams, is the first holder of the Chair. I recommend the book for its personal interest and as a valuable contribution to the history of nutrition.

John W. T. Dickerson

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References

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