

Book Reviews

Frances Sizer and Eleanor Whitney. *Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies*, 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth 2002. £32.99 (paperback). pp. 578. ISBN 0 534 57799 7

This book is a well-written introductory text that presents the fundamental concepts of human nutrition in a very readable and understandable style. The authors assume a limited scientific background making the text potentially accessible to a wide audience. All biological concepts are explained in full and most of the scientific terms used are defined in margins supporting the main text. In addition, the content of Chapter 3 provides the reader with an overview of the biological systems supported by clear coloured diagrams. The text proceeds to discuss the nutrients arranged in separate chapters to cover carbohydrates, lipids, protein, vitamins and the minerals. Subsequent chapters address energy balance and the relationship between diet and health. Chapter 10 focuses on the health benefits associated with regular physical activity. However, most chapters contain a short section entitled 'Think Fitness' where the reader is encouraged to consider adequate physical activity in addition to diet as a key component affecting health. This integrated approach to the chapters is a consistent theme throughout the text providing a useful aid to learning. Chapters 11 and 12 consider nutrition over the life cycle. The penultimate chapter is entitled 'Food Safety and Food Technology' and includes topical sections on food additives and the use of pesticides. 'Hunger and the Global Environment' is the title of the final chapter. The text includes food composition tables, which are presented in an appendix.

The authors present information in a format whereby the reader is almost instructed through a course in making informed food choices. The book is written in a very informal style, which may complement the authors' aim that the text be interactive. Each chapter begins with a number of questions such as 'How much water should I drink each day?' and 'Is it possible to consume too much protein?'. These questions are then addressed within the text. In each chapter there are study exercises and assignments including some 'self-help' multiple-choice questions. Many of the assignments are orientated to allowing the reader to 'develop a feel for the nutrients in food'. This is supported by the inclusion of a CD-ROM providing additional assignments, study questions and hyperlinks to relevant web sites.

One of the strengths of the book is that each chapter ends with a 'Controversy' section. These sections serve to provide additional reading, conveniently following the more established information in the core text ('Concepts'). These sections discuss contemporary issues in nutrition including health benefits of alcohol, use of ergogenic aids and the role of functional foods. Some of these sections are well presented in the form of debates such as 'Controversy 6' entitled 'Vegetarians versus meat eaters: whose diet is best?' These sections are not only informative but

provide stimulating reading. However, 'Controversy 1' provides guidance on recognising the dubious nutritional information used to market food products. This is useful, but one cannot help but notice that the very cover of the book reads 'the Ninth Edition can help you do more than succeed in the course – it can help enhance your life!' Each chapter also has a section entitled 'Consumer Corner'. These sections give a concise informative summary on various topical issues such as the safety of irradiated foods and the use of sports drinks.

Information is supported by a reference list in an appendix, but the authors make no attempt to describe any key studies in the text. In addition, the book is weak in its description of nutrition research and surveillance. Some readers may find the style of the book almost patronising and the number of 'value added features' such as the assignments and exercises to be somewhat surplus to requirement. The book could easily be condensed while retaining its factual content. One may also question aspects relating to presentation. First, core information is highlighted as 'key points'. However, these are brief and scattered throughout the text. It would be more useful if these were grouped to provide chapter summaries. Second, the use of coloured headings and subheadings often hinders clarity. This extends to tables, all of which are presented with awful vivid yellow backgrounds. Finally, there are also too many florid and often pointless images of food. Should the book be read or eaten?

The book is competitively priced but its orientation is towards the US market, which may somewhat limit its suitability to target audiences in the UK. For example, differences between the US and UK regarding nutrition policy, dietary guidelines and food labelling are not addressed unlike in many UK texts. However, this remains a very readable textbook and contains some useful sections. It is therefore worth adding this book, as an introductory text, to the reading list of students undertaking non-clinical courses.

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S. E. Byrom. *Pocket Guide to Nutrition and Dietetics*, Edinburgh, London, New York, Philadelphia, St Louis, Sydney and Toronto: Churchill Livingstone 2002. £16.99. pp. 189. ISBN 0 443 07136 5

This book has been written by a State Registered Dietitian who, having reflected on her training, has put together a

reference text which contains a wide range of clinical data and practical information that is useful on clinical placement. The result is a practical, pocket-sized, user-friendly book, which contains a wealth of up to date and relevant information. Although designed for student dietitians, this book would also be useful for qualified dietitians, nutritionists, pharmacists, nursing and medical staff with an interest or involvement in nutrition.

Notes at the beginning outline the aim and possible usage of the book. Each section begins with a comprehensive list of contents and specific guidelines for the use of that information. Referencing at the end of each chapter is clear and up to date with reputable sources of further or specialist information given.

Section 1 covers nutritional requirements for all nutrients in both adults and children. It includes how to calculate requirements, conversion tables, how to perform anthropometric measurements, Dietary Reference Values and lists of good sources of micronutrients. Section 2 is about artificial nutritional support and includes enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition. Each procedure is clearly defined. Indications for feeding, methods of administration, contra-indications, possible complications and practical issues including types of tubes and pumps are included. The information on what to do when a patient is discharged home with a feed is an area that is often neglected but is clearly explained here.

Section 3 covers an extensive list of nutrition and drug interactions with clear explanations of the type of interaction. The list is separated into several convenient categories, for example, insulin, oral hypoglycaemic agents, appetite stimulants, lipid regulating drugs etc. Section 4 lists the available enteral tube feeds, sip feeds and other nutritional supplements. Although this information is readily available this is a particularly useful format and covers a wide range of products. Vitamin and mineral supplements are not included as there is such a vast selection available.

Appendix 1 includes general nutritional and medical data including blood biochemistry, conversion factors and abbreviations. The reader is warned to always check local policies and guidelines. This wise advice is reinforced on several occasions. Appendices 2 and 3 are specifically designed for dietitians and cover the clinical placement, dietetic documentation, the patient interview, taking a diet history and tables of portion sizes and nutritional values

of commonly used foods. There are examples of appropriate paper work to accompany several situations; for example, information to be recorded in medical notes by a dietitian. These practical and simple guidelines are extremely useful for students and newly qualified staff and would not normally be found with the clinical information.

Throughout the text, diagrams and flow charts are used to illustrate pathways and procedures; for example sites for anthropometric measurements, positioning of enteral and parenteral feeding tubes. All are clearly and accurately drawn with relevant labels and keys. Definitions are clearly described and nutritional jargon is explained. Information is succinct using bullet points and checklists but with sufficient detail to make it clear. There are blank pages at the back allowing for other information to be added, for example data used in specialist areas or local procedures and guidelines.

Although this book is aimed at the student dietitian it has many uses for other professionals who have an interest in nutrition. Some sections, however, do refer to areas of work that would usually only be performed by a dietitian such as feeding regimens for enteral tube feeding. This book is probably most useful for those working in a hospital environment but is certainly also relevant in a community setting, for example general practice where nutritional issues may arise. Readers should be aware that some of the information, by its nature, would need to be updated regularly, for example contact details, composition and packaging of enteral tube feeds and sip feeds.

This book is very easy to read, highly practical and would be used almost daily by a student or newly qualified dietitian working in a hospital environment. Others with an interest in nutrition would find it a very useful addition to the bookshelf, which, if you are interested in nutrition, is unlikely to gather dust.

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