



Book Review

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Menopause: Change choice and HRT

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Menopause is a natural progression in the life of all women but has been steeped in mystery and confusion for centuries. With current research and technologies, and with women living longer, understanding of this time of change is vital for maintaining a healthy constitution. Recently a new book has been published that attempts to sort out the science and demystify this normal physiological process.

The purpose of this book was to explain the process of hormonal changes that influence a woman's body and health during perimenopause and menopause. It gives an explanation of the research, biology and treatments that may benefit a woman during this time of her life and is aimed obviously at women but would also be of benefit to anyone who is involved in the treatment or care of women. The authors both have extensive experience in this area of women's health and are well placed to offer this insight into current thinking, research and practice. Dr Barry Wren is a respected physician with an extensive career in women's health, and Margaret Stephenson-Meere is a midwife and child and family health nurse practitioner. Both these individuals have a long history of contributing to positive health outcomes for many families.

The topic is interesting with the biological aspects instructive at a level that is accessible by the general public; the book would be especially useful and memorable to those who are living this stage of life and to healthcare providers who would benefit from a current, well written concise resource on this topic. Other texts currently available on this topic offer a different perspective and have varying coverage of the biological aspects of menopause but offer more depth on the social aspects of this time of life. This therefore places this book in a unique position to provide an inclusive text that is suitable for a greater audience.

The information is current and provides an accurate summary of the research that has contributed to this field of knowledge. There has been some controversy and myth

surrounding the usefulness of hormone replacement therapy (HRT); this text includes opinion on the validity of some of the results from various studies that may have altered the perceptions of women and health professionals at large regarding HRT and its efficacy and safety.

The strengths of this book include it being a resource that provides answers to many questions that a woman may not think to ask or be too embarrassed to ask during a consultation. The descriptions of biological processes provide greater detail of processes without bogging down the reader. It has a range of appropriate quotes and sayings - both historical and modern - that are thought provoking, relevant and provide context. There are case studies and examples of personal experience to which many women reading this book will be able to relate which adds a more personal touch to what can otherwise be a more solemn topic. Because of this the readability by a general audience is assured without minimising the science for those who want it. It may also open an arena for discussion of this much maligned stage of a women's biological life. The summary of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study was particularly well done as this piece of research has been used by many as a basis for forming assumptions about many aspects of women's health and highlights that care needs to be taken when interpreting results.

This book is clearly set out and easy to read. The chapters are not too long, and there is a bullet pointed summary at the end of each chapter that provides an instant focus of the main points covered and provides a lead in to the next chapter. The illustrations are basic, as is required for the general audience, while being informative and relevant to the corresponding text. There is a summary of the available forms of HRT plus also non-pharmacological alternatives that may be of use to some women; this provides an informative reference regarding treatment that can be used to make informed choices. Clear appendices with more specific information are available to those that require further depth or explanation and a glossary of terms allows for easy access to information about aspects of this theme that are specific to the reader.

This interesting, informative and instructive text provides a useful, succinct but thorough resource that would benefit many women by increasing their understanding of their biological processes both pre and post menopause. It may



also help women in their decisions regarding the treatment of the symptoms during this physiological change. It will also be a resource that health professionals will find worthwhile in informing their practice when working with women at this stage of life.

About the book

Wren BG, Stephenson Meere M. Menopause: Change, choice and HRT. Rockpool Publishing; NSW, Australia. 2013.