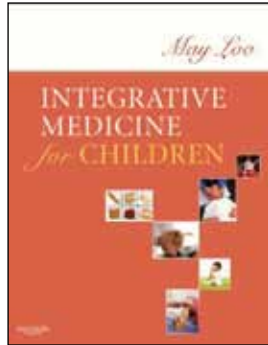


Book Reviews

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE FOR CHILDREN. May Loo. Saunders Elsevier. September 2008, Hardback, 536pp. £36.99. ISBN 978-1-4160-2299-2



Increasingly patients and their parents are turning to complementary and alternative medicines (CAM). As paediatricians, CAM practitioners and indeed parents ourselves we need to understand these therapies to take a full medical history, considering merits and potential adverse effects of CAM, in order to offer an educated opinion to our patients. Many books exist dealing with individual therapies but this reference book aims to symbiotically blend conventional medical diagnosis and treatment with all of the major CAM. The author is Clinical Professor of Paediatrics and Anaesthesiology in Stanford, California while the 32 contributors and consultants have backgrounds as diverse as Professor of Pharmacy, Attending Physician in Neurology, Clinical Nurse Specialist from a Paediatric Integrative Medicine Program to Chinese Herbal Consultants.

The first section of the book presents the history, theory, current evidence-based information, applications and contra-indications of CAM. The chapters are nicely written, informative and well researched, although my own personal, scientific and religious bias made some modalities such as past life regression and Qigong, magnet or energy medicines difficult to comprehend. Conventional medicine would clearly benefit from the increased time, thoroughness and breadth of the clinical history taking in all the modalities. Of interest the principles of naturopathic medicine “*primum non nocere*”: first do no harm, “*tolle totum*”: treat the whole person, “*docere*”: doctor as teacher and “*preveniri*”: prevention with adoption of a healthy lifestyle show clear parallels to the Hippocratic oath. Unbiased comprehensive reference lists

including recent papers from high impact medical journals (New England Journal of Medicine, Archives of Disease in Childhood and Lancet to name a few), an occasional Cochrane collaborative review, as well as larger texts for further study were impressive, with links to a few reputable regularly updated websites. Illustrations and tables range from body maps of acupuncture points, massage endangerment sites, tables of vitamin and mineral toxicity or deficiencies and botanical agents to be used in caution with children or lactating mothers.

The second section is a focused reference for 55 acute and chronic paediatric conditions with such random complaints as asthma, cancer, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, fifth disease, inflammatory bowel disease, umbilical hernia and urinary tract infections. The introductory conventional medical diagnosis and treatment section is often scanty and occasionally predictably controversial, such as the proposal that the MMR vaccine is involved in the immunological aetiology of autism. The CAM section is often repetitive - tea tree oil discussed under 3 modality headings within 3 pages on acne, with the same paper discussed and re-referenced 3 times, including a typing error! Much effort has been made to back the CAM recommendations with a solid but scientifically small evidence base but certain statements do alarm for example p136 “for acute abdominal pain caused by more serious conditions, such as that due to early appendicitis, administering a homeopathic remedy early in the course, as the patient is on the way to seek emergency care, may avert the need for surgery”. The naturopathic and nutritional advice is generally useful, particularly regarding constipation, headaches and obesity, but would need co-operative, highly motivated, educated and well financed patients and parents. Many of the psychology and spirituality techniques described, such as visualisations for depression, are practical.

In summary this book is a useful reference for a medical library, certainly offers an encyclopaedic base to broaden knowledge of CAM, and would be a useful starting point for further research into CAM options available for a specific patient.

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