

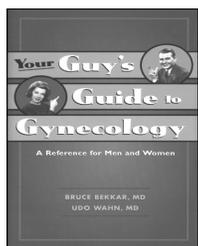


Book Reviews

Your Guy's Guide to Gynecology: a Resource for Men and Women.

By Bruce Bekkar, MD and Udo Wahn, MD

Review by Patricia C. Gallo, PA-C



Your Guy's Guide to Gynecology is a plethora of information for today's men who care about the women in their lives. This reference combines highly technical information and top-secret female facts in a humorous writing style that helps make learning easy for most men. The book helps uncover the mysteries surrounding female health problems and covers all the important topics men will need to understand women's health issues.

Bruce Bekkar, MD and Udo Wahn, MD wrote *Your Guy's Guide*. Both are Board-certified, practicing gynecologists with SCPMG and hold teaching positions with the Department of Reproductive Medicine at the University of California at San Diego. Between them, they represent more than 30 years of clinical experience providing health care for women. Dr Wahn has been on the staff at Kaiser Permanente in San Diego for more than 16 years; Dr Bekkar, for 12 years. These physicians have been teaching an ongoing monthly class at SCPMG, San Diego—"For Men Only"—to help men better understand women and enable men to be more supportive when PMS, menopause, and other gynecologic issues emerge. The monthly class has become very popular and helpful to our members, and now the same important information is available in a book.

The authors' premise is that men do care about women's health problems despite what women believe. As guys, Bekkar and Wahn believe this lack of attentiveness is due to lack of information—not insensitivity or a short attention span. *Your Guy's Guide to Gynecology* enables men to be comfortable with women's issues by providing them information in an interactive, "guy-friendly" way.

The authors have included helpful suggestions for men who have specific female questions. My favorite example is from Chapter 6, "Attack of the Killer Hormones." Here "Supportive Guy" (the icon for sensible suggestions) recommends what to do if your partner has PMS. The suggestion goes something like this: Help out more around the house. Be understanding. Listen patiently. Ask her how she is feeling. Encourage her to exercise and watch her diet. And don't forget to hide the chocolate, guys!

Although marketed for men, this book isn't just for them; many women will want to use it as a resource guide as well. Other women will want to buy it for their guy. Household partners who read this book together will be better able to manage gynecologic issues and thus make their relationship stronger. By sharing this book with their male partners, some women will no longer find themselves alone when dealing with their health problems, and their male partners will become more comfortable discussing the various issues of women's physical and emotional health.

For health care professionals, this book is humorous, easy to read, and informative. It is an important book that could help health care practitioners present information to their patients in a down-to-earth style that is easily understood. *Your Guy's Guide to Gynecology* is a reference source that should be included in your personal library of medical texts. Readers—men, women, and health care professionals of all kinds—should find this book an overdue resource that helps to demystify gynecology, a subject that has been taboo for too long.

325 p. \$24.95 ISBN: 0965506746.

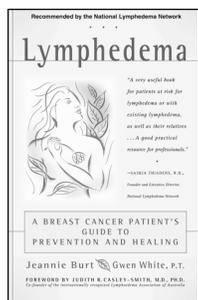
East Sandwich, MA: North Star Publications [Ant Hill Press], 2000.

Patricia C. Gallo, PA-C, has been with the Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego for 12 years. Previously, she worked in Occupational Medicine for the Consolidated Rail Corporation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She attended the Physician Assistant Program at Hahnemann University. She is the mother of two children and is married to a Physician Assistant.

Lymphedema: A Breast Cancer Patient's Guide to Prevention and Healing

By Jeannie Burt & Gwen White, PT; Foreword by Judith Casley-Smith, MD

Review by Diane C. Strum



In July 1997, at age 49, I was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer. I was stunned, devastated, and filled with fear about the future. As do most women diagnosed with breast cancer, I started reading books, most of which were recommended or given to me by well-meaning friends. However, the focus on statistical survival rates for women with breast cancer only served to create more fear in me, and I soon abandoned reading about breast cancer and instead placed my trust in my physicians.

I considered myself fortunate that both my surgeon and my oncologist at Kaiser Permanente in San Diego informed me about all the possibilities associated with my cancer, including lymphedema. However, I was angry and fearful about this other possible consequence of the cancer, yet another assault and deformity on my body.

Had this book been available and brought to my attention, I could have at least minimized my fear of lymphedema. The book is written by two women: one is a physical therapist at Kaiser Permanente in Portland, Oregon;

the other, a woman with lymphedema. I found the book both informative and comforting. Throughout the book, the authors present a message of hopefulness about a woman's ability to both prevent and control lymphedema.

The book is easy to read and to understand. It is written from a firsthand perspective and includes not only a comprehensive, lay explanation of what lymphedema is and why it occurs but also contains great information on how to prevent it, treatments available, resources, support groups, and probably what for me was most important: ways to self-treat.

For me, one of the great losses associated with breast cancer was the loss of control over my body. I was a person who had taken good care of myself for most of my adult life. I had good eating habits, exercised regularly, and didn't smoke. I had engaged in this healthy lifestyle as a way of balancing a strong familial history of heart disease that struck family members at a young age. My friends and family all said that I was the last person they would have expected to develop breast cancer. Yet it seemed nothing I had done had helped prevent cancer. I felt I had lost control over my body and what was happening to me.

And so, the emphasis in this book on how to prevent lymphedema—and more important, how to self-treat when lymphedema develops—was of particular interest to me; I could do something to help the condition if it developed. The authors offer hope that a person with lymphedema can at least gain some control over it, unlike my cancer.

I liked and appreciated the organization of the book. The chapters were well named, so I could skip around in the book and first read chapters of most interest or that I felt were most relevant to me. I learned new things about what not to do and how to be aware of the early signs of lymphedema. The chapter on preventing lymphedema refreshed my memory about what my physicians had told me to be careful of; and those admonitions made more sense to me as I better understood the etiology of lymphedema. For example, I better understood why I should avoid cuts on the hand and arm on the lumpectomy side of my body and site of lymph node removal; why my right arm shouldn't be used for taking my blood pressure or for administering shots; why I shouldn't cut my cuticles; and why I should wear gloves while gardening.

For me personally, as someone who works for Kaiser Permanente and who receives all my care at Kaiser Permanente from Permanente physicians, the book validated the treatment I had received for my cancer. In addition, I felt a renewed sense of appreciation for the care I received and for my good fortune to have been treated by caring physicians who were so thorough about all aspects and ramifications of my cancer.

Conclusion:

I suggest that this book be given or at least recommended to all breast cancer patients diagnosed and treated at Kaiser Permanente. It would be a very caring thing to do.

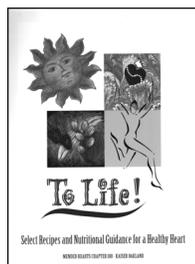
224 p. \$12.95 ISBN 0-89793-2641. Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 2000.

Diane C. Strum is Director of Government Relations and Community Services for Kaiser Permanente in San Diego.

To Life! Select Recipes and Nutritional Guidance for a Healthy Heart

Mended Hearts Chapter 188, compilers

Review by Jeanne Weissman, Viviana Lombrozo, Louise Felitti



To Life! What a wonderful title for a cookbook designed to guide patients with coronary artery disease through the uncertainties of low-fat cuisine. The goal is depicted clearly on the book's attractive, colorful cover.

Inside, help abounds. The recipes are favorites gathered by Mended Hearts Chapter 188 at Kaiser Permanente in Oakland from individuals and from famous Bay Area restaurants. Famous chef Graham Kerr has contributed a section on basic cooking techniques. Each recipe contains a nutritional analysis of calories, fat, cholesterol, carbohydrates, protein, and sodium.

The dishes described here are *not* "hospital food." The book contains a remarkable range of recipes—reminiscent of the famous, ethnically diverse restaurants of San Francisco but all simple and designed for relatively inexperienced cooks. If you've never eaten cactus (nopalitos), here's a new experience. If you think potato-leek soup is out because of the cream, here's a nice solution. And if you like desserts, the book presents a baker's dozen. William Castelli, MD, former Medical Director of the Framingham Heart Study, once commented that most Americans eat only ten menus. *To Life!* is a cure for dull eating.

Arthur Klatsky, MD, retired Senior Cardiologist from TPMG in Oakland, is one of the people to whom this book is dedicated. He has contributed a most interesting chapter on the role of alcohol in heart disease. And a retired cardiologist equally valued by our Health Plan members in Oakland, Rudolph Oehm, MD, authored the chapter on nutrition. Both cardiologists have obviously extended themselves beyond the usual concept of what cardiologists do.



It would be helpful if future editions of the book mentioned specific brand names. For instance, only one truly low-sodium soy sauce (65 mg/tbsp vs 1000 mg/tbsp) is available in the United States: Bonsai Soy Sauce (800-826-0688). New food items might also be listed: Land O'Lakes *nonfat* Half-and-Half cream substitute; Trader Joe's Raspberry-Jalapeno Sauce, which makes an excellent fat-free, low sodium appetizer on crackers and a delicious sauce on fish; and Eden brand Kombu, a product used to reduce the gaseous effect of eating beans. Creation of a Web site might help the Mended Hearts Chapter to keep this kind of useful information current.

This book can readily be recommended for providing guidance and motivation for better eating to busy people who want to keep their families healthy or who want to undo the damage created by high-fat diets. The book can be purchased directly from Mended Hearts Chapter 188, c/o the Health Education Center, Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, 280 West MacArthur Boulevard, Oakland, CA 94611-5693; or from Morton Schaffran, 700 Hancock Way, El Cerrito, CA 94530, 510/525-5773.

179 p. \$15. Oakland, California: Kaiser [Permanente], 1999. Library of Congress 99-63539

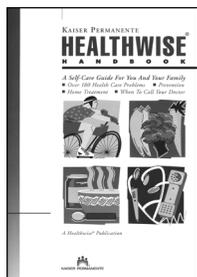
About the reviewers: One reviewer is married to someone who recently had coronary artery surgery; another reviewer is a vegetarian artist; and another is a serious cook.

Medical Guides

Review by Eve F. Lynch

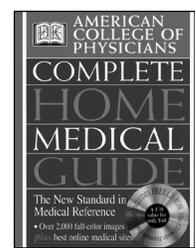
What is more important: a good bedside manner, or a good bedside manual? Both are essential parts of the overall health care picture. Everyone benefits when patients have access to medical information that can be perused at leisure or referred to in a crisis. Medical care costs can be avoided or diminished when patients don't immediately reach for the phone at the onset of minor medical situations. Patient confidence in medical professionals increases when office visit advice is confirmed by a text. And patient education, understanding, and compliance may well improve when information is read and reread on the patient's own time.

But which text to choose?

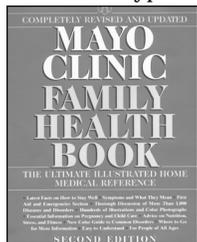


Kaiser Permanente's (KP's) *Healthwise Handbook: A Self-Care Guide for You and Your Family* is a 300-page paperback that is easy to use and easy to keep on a bedside table. In addition to the expected sections on health problems, this book also advises health plan members how to get the most from the KP system, how to make and prepare for medical appointments, how to share in medical decisions, when to use emergency services, and how to prevent and detect specific medical problems. This book is easy to use—permitting search by symptom and advising patients when to treat themselves at home and when to call a health professional. Descriptions are concise and include only the information needed for determining what action, if any, to take in response to a given set of symptoms.

Unlike the relatively brief *Healthwise Handbook*, *The American College of Physicians' Complete Home Medical Guide* is a 1000-page tome, a true medical encyclopedia that covers all human medical topics. The book is packaged with a complimentary CD-ROM, "The Ultimate Human Body," whose three-dimensional graphics allow users "to rotate the body, peel away the layers, examine the organs, circulatory system, and the skeleton, and call up data, thus ensuring a total understanding of how the body's complex organs work." Like all Dorling Kindersley publications, the book is a gorgeous production with slick paper and numerous color photographs and illustrations. Handy flowcharts based on queries about specific symptoms help readers determine whether to contact a health care provider or to use home treatment. The book also contains a lengthy list of health organizations and their Web site addresses.



Although the book is well organized and is a pleasure to read, it contains much more information than is necessary for occasional consultation by most patients. Thus, this book is most suitable for those who wish to read extensively about the human body or who tend to be hypochondriacal.



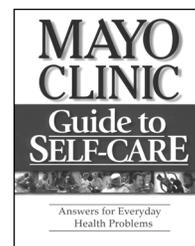
The Mayo Clinic has tackled the tome-versus-handbook dilemma by publishing one volume of each type. The *Mayo Clinic Family Health Book* is some 1350 pages long and includes cradle-to-grave coverage of human diseases and disorders. In addition, the book discusses staying well, first aid and emergency care, nutrition and fitness, and modern medical care. Forms are included for helping patients to draft advance directives. The large book also contains an extensive photographic guide to common skin disorders. The shorter book, the *Mayo Clinic Guide to Self-Care*, includes fewer than 300 pages and is a handbook more suitable for bedside consultation.

For most people, one of the shorter books mentioned here will be most suitable for everyday use. Use of the texts showed that just the weight of the two larger volumes hindered rapid research. These tomes are literally too weighty to use handily—sort of like dragging the *Oxford English Dictionary* into bed or bathroom for consultation during a midnight



bout of diarrhea or fever. The big books require readers to scan a topic's abundant index listings to find the page pertaining to first aid—not what is wanted when rushing to find a treatment for burns.

Although the two longer books are fairly comparable in scope, as are the pair of handbooks, they are not identical. Nor do the bigger books necessarily contain all the information that the handbooks contain. For example, only the KP *Healthwise Handbook* instructs patients on the “hot wire” technique of relieving the pressure of a blood clot located under a fingernail or toenail; the other three books don't mention this very useful topic. The *Mayo Clinic Family Health Book* instructs how to make a tourniquet, whereas the handbooks mention the tourniquet as a last resort but do not direct how to make one, and the American College of Physicians' book advises patients never to use one. Where emergency help is required, the *Mayo Clinic Guide to Self-Care* instructs the reader to “Dial 911,” whereas the other books merely instruct patients to “contact professional help”; the more specific directive—to dial “911”—would probably be of greater use to a panicked reader.



Either of the medical encyclopedias mentioned here would make a good addition to any home reference library but might not occasion much use. On the other hand, I have countless times referred to a medical handbook similar to the two smaller texts listed here. Clearly, some form of home medical reference is important. Which one of these four is best is more a matter of personal preference. If your patients have received the KP *Healthwise Handbook*, they probably have all they need. Ask them to read it—especially the sections on how to better participate in their medical care and any section currently relevant to their own health.

Kemper DW, et al, compilers. *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook: a self-care guide for you and your family*. 12th ed. Boise, Idaho: Healthwise 1995, ©1994. 352 p. \$14.95. ISBN 1877930-091

Goldmann DR, editor. *American College of Physicians complete home medical guide*. 1st Amer ed. New York: DK Publishing; 1999. 1104 p. \$40.00. ISBN 0-7894-4412-7

Larson DE, Editor. *Mayo Clinic family health book*. 2nd ed. New York: W. Morrow; 1996. \$42.50. ISBN 0688144780

Hagen PT, editor. *Mayo Clinic guide to self-care*. 2nd ed. New York: Kensington; 1999. 272 p. \$19.95. ISBN 0962786578

Eve Lynch is a San Francisco attorney, recently retired into motherhood.

Women's Cancers: How to Prevent Them, How to Treat Them, How to Beat Them.

By Kerry A. McGinn, RN, NP and Pamela J. Haylock, RN

Review by Eve F. Lynch



Do you know when local versus systemic cancer therapies are applied, and why? Do you know the side effects of chemotherapy? Do you even know what cancer really is? Well, undoubtedly *you* know, but *I* didn't know, and I bet I'm a lot like the majority of your patients—which is why the book *Women's Cancers: How to Prevent Them, How to Treat Them, How to Beat Them* is the perfect prescription for anyone needing well-organized, understandable information on cancer.

This book is written for the layperson, who—trust me—typically has no accurate knowledge of cancer. But despite its readability, *Women's Cancers* is not overly simplistic. On the contrary, topics are covered thoroughly, educating its readers to be able to conduct intelligent discussion with their caregivers. The authors even include lists of suggested questions to inspire such discussion.

The book spans breast cancer, the various gynecologic cancers, and lung and colorectal cancers, the last two being as much “women's cancers” as they are men's. The authors discuss precancerous conditions, risk factors, prevention, screening, staging and grading of cancer, signs and symptoms, diagnosis and treatment (including traditional and alternative therapies), as well as the psychologic, physical, and emotional ramifications of enduring cancer. A great quantity of information is presented without overwhelming the reader. All technical terms are explained at first appearance in the text and can thus be easily understood without the reader having to look up words (although a glossary is included). Further, the authors refer frequently to other texts which the reader can access for even more or different information on cancer; the vast bibliography also serves as a useful resource.

Women's Cancers is written with a compassionate voice. The authors are concerned about the human being behind the cancer diagnosis. They acknowledge the fears attendant upon a suspicion of or diagnosis of cancer and give a prominent place in the book to the psychologic and emotional aspects of enduring a major illness. As an example of the authors' understanding of the feelings that arise upon even the contemplation of cancer, the following occurred while I was reading the book: I was feeling slightly queasy just reading about a technique called wire localization biopsy, used to explore breast abnormalities. The next section is entitled “Feelings



About a Biopsy” and begins, “It is scary to have a biopsy or other diagnostic procedure.” The section goes on to realistically consider possible feelings when facing a biopsy. What a well-placed section! And how helpful that the authors discuss such things at all. Fear must be a real problem in getting patients to participate in their own care. Identifying areas in which fear may arise and preparing to deal with them is important. The large part of the book dedicated to discussing such things as fear, other people’s reactions to illness, life changes due to cancer, and the like may well end up being more important to a patient than understanding the technical aspects of diagnosis and treatment. The authors warn that “life after cancer” normally does not mean that a woman can resume her previously scheduled life, and they discuss the physical and emotional changes a person will be left to work with as well as challenges to be faced in society, such as discrimination from insurers and employers.

Forewarned is forearmed, and the authors know that a woman is better off when armed with information and ideas about how to take part in her own destiny. Meant to empower women through knowledge and inspiration, the book discusses the patient’s assembling her own recovery team, made up of doctors, nurse practitioners, practitioners of complementary therapies, support groups, family, friends, and the patient herself. The book’s attitude is inspiring, demonstrating that any patient can take action instead of resigning herself to being a “cancer victim.”

Women’s Cancers, a tool for self-empowerment and a guide on how to live, not just survive, is an ideal book for people with cancer and for those who care about them.

512 p. \$19.95. ISBN: 0897932234 Alameda, CA: Hunter House, 1998 [2nd ed.].

Eve Lynch is a San Francisco attorney, recently retired into motherhood.

Escape from Quotation Marks

The last third of the 20th century has inserted, with blatant cynicism, quotation marks around most of our cherished notions of social, political, historical, and psychological existence. Indeed, the whole notion of what a human being is in the age of cloning, cyberspace, and public opinion polls has undergone a radical transformation.

Andrei Codrescu, commentator on National Public Radio