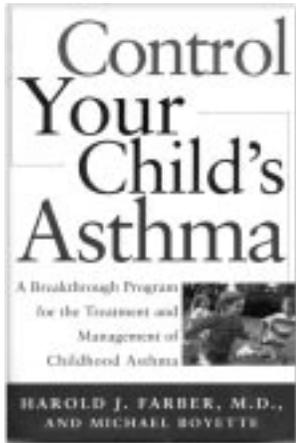




## Book Reviews



New York: Henry Holt; 2001;  
ISBN: 0-8050645-5-9.  
Paperback \$14.00. 256 pages.

### ***Control Your Child's Asthma: A Breakthrough Program for the Treatment and Management of Childhood Asthma***

by Harold J Farber, MD, and Michael Boyette

Review by **Richard M Roth, MD**

Asthma is a frightening and sometimes life-threatening disease. *Control Your Child's Asthma* is a well-organized book to be read and referenced by anyone—parent, health care practitioner, or other justifiably concerned person, such as a teacher with asthmatic students—who wishes to be as knowledgeable as possible in the art of managing and controlling childhood asthma from infancy through adolescence.

*Control Your Child's Asthma* has many pertinent, up-to-date bibliographic references. This feature should give the book high priority over most other similar works on an asthma-related reading list and is especially important for locating other authoritative sources of knowledge useful to those who care for asthmatic children. At the same time, however, this level of detail may limit the breadth of readership because the book does require a certain level of experience and education to be fully appreciated.

As is clearly indicated on the cover in boldface red letters, the book is about controlling (not curing) asthma. The road map to achieving or maintaining this control—as well as recapturing lost control—is beautifully, clearly, and (in most areas) simply laid out for the reader, and the book appropriately assigns a high degree of importance to a key aspect of good asthma control: finding a knowledgeable, competent health care practitioner and establishing an alliance with that person. Unfortunately, however, the book does not sufficiently emphasize the important fact that a cure for asthma does not exist, either at present or in the foreseeable future. This point should be presented more prominently because some parents who believe otherwise may be inclined to seek this mythical cure relentlessly and in ways detrimental to the child.

As good as this book is, future editions could make a few areas even better. I would point out that QVAR<sup>®</sup> is mentioned early in Chapter 7 but is missing from the drug table on the last page of the chapter. Moreover, the book does not overtly mention what has become the clarion call of asthma control: the “Rule of 2’s.” This topic would fit nicely (preferably highlighted in boldface type) under the existing heading, “Staying in the Green Zone.”<sup>1:108</sup> The lengthy discussion on theophylline therapy could be replaced by a brief notation, eg, “This drug is rarely used today for asthma therapy.”

I would also point out that “mild intermittent” asthma<sup>1:108</sup> is not a class of asthma severity recognized by the NHLBI Guidelines of 1997,<sup>2</sup> even though most experts would agree that children can have a mild, moderate, or severe degree of intermittent asthma. In addition, a brief reference to taking zafirlukast with food to enhance absorption<sup>1:73</sup> is contrary to the actual recommendation.<sup>3,4</sup>

Perhaps more encouragement would be given to parents and health care providers if, on page 57, mention were made of the newer, higher-potency inhaled corticosteroids, which provide more rapid onset of action (one to three days, in many cases).

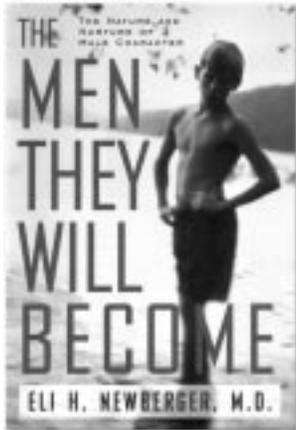
The book’s format makes liberal use of tinted boxes to emphasize important points, but I believe this technique could have been used even more. For example, greater visual emphasis would be useful in the section discussing inhaled corticosteroid use and its effect on growth (ie, a neutral effect, in most cases),<sup>5-7</sup> because this issue arises repeatedly in practice. I would also advocate more liberal use of boldface type to highlight headings or key issues, eg, “Staying in the Green Zone”;<sup>1:108</sup> and in the chapter on “Complementary and Alternative Treatments”; to the sentence (“None of these approaches can fully substitute for asthma medications”<sup>1:186</sup>) I would add “or avoidance of triggers.”

**Richard M Roth, MD** has been with SCPMG for over 25 years, serving as the Chief of the Department of Allergy for the Orange County MSA, and is a physician co-lead for KP Southern California Asthma Care Management Program since its inception in June of 1998.

All in all, this first edition of *Control Your Child's Asthma* is a superb book for educating persons who are genuinely interested in understanding more about this common, complex, and all-too-often distressing syndrome of childhood. ❖

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Reading, MA: Perseus Books;  
1999. 372 p. \$25.00  
ISBN: 0-7382-0113-8

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

### ***The Men They Will Become: The Nature and Nurture of Male Character*** by Eli H Newberger, MD

**Review by Eve Lynch**

It is a truism often attributed to Yogi Berra that “If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll wind up somewhere else.” If you could determine where your son was headed, where would that be? What kind of man would you want him to become? What character traits do you value and hope to develop in your son—for his own sake and for the sake of the world? *The Men They Will Become: The Nature and Nurture of Male Character* spurs the reader to contemplate these questions.

And this questioning is no mere intellectual exercise: in the book, author Eli Newberger, MD, states that although some basic characteristics of temperament are in place early in a boy’s life, parental influence and modeling are major factors in the development of his “character,” a broadly inclusive collection of traits that mark the ways in which people make life decisions and comport themselves toward others.

*The Men They Will Become* discusses major developmental stages in the life of a boy from his infancy through late adolescence as well as the character challenges he is likely to meet at each stage. These challenges—and the way they are managed—further shape who the person will become. (Although supposedly addressing development of boys, most of the information contained in this book is equally applicable to girls.)

The male infant “develops fundamental attitudes about himself and his surroundings”<sup>1:4</sup> ie; develops trust or mistrust on the basis of whether his physical and emotional needs are met; and develops a capacity for intimacy on the basis of the attention he receives from caregivers. As a preschooler, the child’s world enlarges and he must



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confront a new issue: conflict between his own interest and the rights of others. School-aged children confront issues of honesty and self-control as well as bullying and other forms of victimization. As adolescents, they encounter cheating, drug abuse, and problems of identity and friendship.

Under each of these rubrics, Dr Newberger weaves profiles and interviews of real boys, anecdotes, literary quotations, clinical studies, and his own insight as a pediatrician to illustrate how boys negotiate personal and social problems, resolution of which shapes the emerging man. The most successful boys—ie, those who possess admirable character traits and act accordingly—are those whose lives included parents or other significant adults who clearly communicated their expectations for the child's behavior; who discussed options for handling difficult situations; and who expected the children to live with the consequences of their actions. These children also were likely to have observed their parents in a situation where the parents modeled the behavior; in other words, the parents “practiced what they preached.” For children with this type of adult support, even difficult situations were transformed into character-building opportunities with lasting positive value. The book contains practical tips on how to foster this type of relationship with a child and how to elicit dialogue with children of different ages to make them more receptive to discussing serious issues with their parents.

In striking contrast to the examples of successful parent-child character-building teamwork, the book also contains alarming illustrations of youthful character development that was seriously compromised by parents who sought to exempt their child or other family members from the consequences of the child's criminal behavior or other proscribed activities.

In an important chapter on teasing and bullying, Newberger discusses the serious harm caused to children by behaviors that, when committed by adults against adults, are normally handled by criminal or civil courts but which have long been treated as an inevitable part of childhood. In contrast to the “blind eye” treatment given by most schools to such behavior, the author reports that some schools now preemptively teach respect and empathy for children who are most likely to become victims of teasing and bullying; this preemptive teaching recasts teasing and bullying as “injuries to the community.”<sup>1,201</sup> These programs are proving effective, a result that shows that children's inclination toward bad behavior can be tempered by effective adult intervention. In addition, instead of merely meting out punishment on an episodic and rules-oriented basis, educators who seek reasons for the bullying may help to “heal the offender as well as his target, and to reinforce the values of the community.”<sup>1,201</sup>

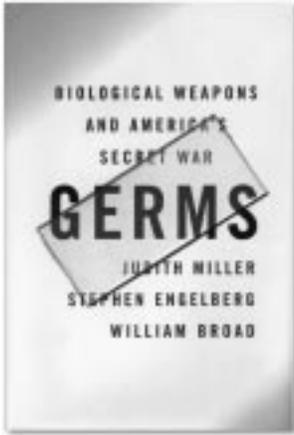
Newberger also argues convincingly that organized sports fail to qualify as the healthy form of “play” needed by boys and that these activities instead distort the very traits of “character” that sports are traditionally purported to engender in boys. Moreover, Newberger asserts, these activities have even led to the decline of “sportsmanship” throughout our society.

At one point in the book, Newberger concludes, “males get to this highest level of trustworthiness [or, it seems clear, to the highest level of any other positive character trait] ... by encountering someone who embodies it. It is a level of character that is much more effectively caught than taught.”<sup>1,299</sup> This statement reminds parents and other concerned adults to comport themselves in ways they would like the next generation to reflect. After all, if we don't put effort into directing our sons, we shouldn't be surprised if they wind up somewhere else. ❖

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\$27.00. ISBN: 0-684-87158-0

## ***Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War***

by Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, William Broad

**Review by Vincent J Felitti, MD**

Until recently, most of us never thought about biological warfare. Few of us know anything factual about it. Now, however, and most timely, three staff writers from *The New York Times* have given us an important, well-written book about biological warfare.

Many people have largely written off biological warfare as merely a highly effective form of psychological warfare and too uncontrollable for serious military use. After all, these people have reasoned, how could anyone send soldiers into an area rendered contagious? That thinking made sense until September 11, when it became clear that the great technical skill of responsible personnel could be circumvented by the theft or illicit purchase of biohazardous materials for suicidal destruction, not conquest, of innocent civilian people and property; and that the perpetrators and supporters of this destruction could represent it as an act of martyrdom.

*Germs* opens with a detailed description of the planned, complex bioterrorist attacks carried out in Oregon in the 1980s by a religious group known as the Rajneeshees. Many of us have only a dim memory of those episodes. Like many topics in this Winter issue of *TPJ*, they seemed improbable events. They were terribly disturbing if true, and they were only fractionally reported in the press because of governmental concern that full exposure might lead to copycat episodes. Secrecy, threat, and implausibility are the engines that drive denial. We all tend to deny the existence of things with which we can't cope.

The book then delves into the complex psychology that interprets any significant change as an ordeal, even if the change is for the better. And acknowledging the realistic threat of biological warfare involves changing a basic concept of warfare; changing such a basic concept does not happen easily, especially in hierarchical organizations like the military. Yet, in the years since 1969, when President Nixon shut down all American biological warfare production at the US Army Pine Bluff Arsenal, Arkansas, the realization slowly emerged that the USSR had begun its own biowarfare version of the Manhattan Project (the World War II US-sponsored project to develop the atom bomb). The authors describe and document this activity so extensively as to eliminate all doubt. In this context, the recently announced American decision not to destroy our stores of smallpox virus becomes reassuring.

The book's main revelation is the magnitude and remarkable skill of the Soviet Union's biological warfare efforts: These activities dwarf any of ours that had been underway when we stopped research and production. For instance, the Soviets successfully reengineered bacteria and viruses that can induce demyelinating disease (p 302) long after all signs of initial infection disappear; this process thus makes detection of the initiating cause nearly impossible. Soviet researchers also spliced the diphtheria toxin gene into the plague bacillus to create an entirely new disease (p 303). The staggering amounts of biological warfare material they stockpiled include tons of smallpox virus (p 311). Worse yet, with the collapse of the USSR, responsible control of these products disappeared, leaving large numbers of sophisticated biowarfare scientists suddenly unemployed in a dead economy. These highly skilled scientists instantly became prime candidates for employment by Iraq, Iran, Syria, and North Korea—nations that now have dangerous biological warfare capabilities.

Complicating this scenario is the related story of how this information is obtained by the CIA or provided by defectors. After such information is validated, it has a long and difficult passage through the government bureaucracy, where it is buffeted by the emotions as well as the politics of multiple officials. *Germs* makes it clear that few officials wish to take any stand that creates a paradigm shift. Nonetheless, some ingenious partial solutions at times have occurred, such as the US Government's purchase of dangerous USSR biowarfare materials and joint US-Russian research projects designed to employ at least some former Soviet researchers, thus diverting their expertise from terrorist nations. However, most of the problem remains unsolved, and a few nations—such as Iraq, which in 1995 admitted to producing thousands of gallons of germ warfare

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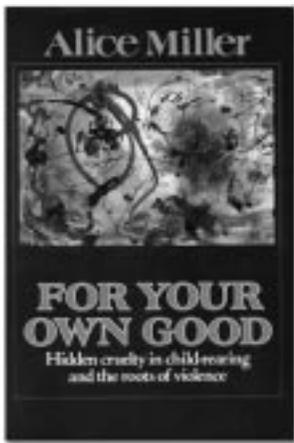
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materials (p 289)—are totally beyond the reach of even these partial solutions.

The remarkable Harvard biologist Edward O Wilson once commented that the Nobel Prize is won by bright children whom no one ever sufficiently loved (Personal communication, December 12, 2001).<sup>3</sup> Who, then, are these people who become terrorists? And how does that question relate to articles in this issue, whose focus is pediatric topics? The seemingly powerless—whose childhoods may have been influenced in ways we cannot readily know—now can wreak great damage on a modern, powerful country if they are willing to die in the attempt by flying airplanes into buildings or by volunteering to become a smallpox carrier. Who are these people, and how do they come to be?

For all the information and insight contained in the book, however, vast problems remain. The current anthrax scare mainly demonstrates the psychological power of biological warfare; the main biological dangers have not yet been seen. We are not prepared for them. The problem is not simple, and the solution is not self-evident. ❖

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\$14.00 ISBN: 0-374-52269-3  
Out of print hardcover  
editions: [www.Alibris.com](http://www.Alibris.com)  
or [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)

**Ms Kittrelle** is a nurse practitioner who worked for many years in SCPMG's Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego. She suggests these two Web sites for those interested in what happens to and becomes of children: [www.alice-miller.com](http://www.alice-miller.com), and [www.nospank.org](http://www.nospank.org).

### ***For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence***

by Alice Miller, PhD, Translated by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum

Review by Robin Kittrelle, RNP

***"The truth about childhood is stored up in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused, and our body tricked with medication. But someday the body will present its bill ..."*—Alice Miller<sup>1</sup>**

Alice Miller, PhD, is a German psychoanalyst whose mission in life is to make the world a better place for children by helping the adults who care for them understand their *own* childhood events. She has written ten books about the effects of childhood on the lives of adults. Her equally important other goal is to expand that responsibility to society—ie, the villages that raise the children. *For Your Own Good* may be Dr Miller's most renowned book, and this review doubles as a tribute to Dr Miller and to her firm and persistent voice.

Miller writes about a "helping witness"—someone who acts (routinely, or even once at a critical time) with kindness toward the child and who somehow, by looking into the child's eyes, shows the child another way to live and be. This helper may have no idea of his or her role but nonetheless acts as a counterweight to the cruelty or neglect a child experiences. Dr Miller says that a critical prerequisite for normal survival is that *at least once* in their lives, mistreated children come into contact with a person who understands that the environment, not the child, is at fault. This helping witness teaches the child that he or she is worthy of kindness. This lesson is the basis for resilience.

Dr Miller also describes a "knowing or enlightened witness"—someone who understands the importance of being a helping witness. This person recognizes the adverse effects of childhood trauma or neglect and is willing to give emotional support that helps a child understand and express true feelings. Sadly, the first (and perhaps only) "knowing witness" in most people's lives is often a therapist—but readily could be any physician, nurse, or teacher who is willing to understand what the child sees every day.

In her struggles with the question, "What causes evil in the world?" Miller writes here about the childhood of Adolph Hitler, Josef Stalin, and other mass murderers. Most recently, she wrote about corporal punishment.<sup>2</sup> She documents a worldwide fact: Most of today's parents and teachers were physically punished as children.



Society's argument to justify this phenomenon is that being beaten, especially by a parent, prepares children for life and helps them learn to be obedient; indeed, we are all familiar with the exhortation to "beat some sense into [him/her/them]." In disagreement with this viewpoint, Miller argues that being beaten and unable to defend themselves only teaches children that they are not worthy of protection or respect. Beaten children become humiliated and confused although soon are taught that the beating is "for their own good" and does no lasting harm. Much later, this type of beating becomes a part of their own so-called good parenting—forming the basis for much violence in the world. The events of September 11, 2001, have provided the world an additional example of anger, revenge, and ignorance expressed as violence toward oneself and others—and have brought Miller's *For Your Own Good* back into focus. ❖

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