

Best Consumer Health Books of 2004

By Barbara Bibel — May 1, 2005

One need only pick up a newspaper or turn on the television to know that there is a healthcare crisis in the United States. The flu vaccine shortage, the recall of Cox 2 inhibitors, and the lack of health insurance by 40 percent of all Americans have all been in the headlines. Add to that an aging population, warnings about the impending demise of Social Security and Medicare, and the high cost of prescription drugs, and the national stress level rises dangerously. Baby boomers now find themselves caring for both children and parents as they themselves join the ranks of senior citizens. It is no surprise that many of them seek health information from the library. Publishers continue to offer a variety of materials that deal with current health issues. On this list, books about elder care, coping with chronic conditions, and cancer share the spotlight with a glimpse at the intense work of a burn unit and an exposé of drug companies.

Cancer

American Cancer Society's Complete Guide to Prostate Cancer. American Cancer Society. 394p. ed. by David G. Bostwick, M.D. & others. illus. index. ISBN 0-944235-54-9. pap. \$19.95. Statistic: prostate cancer kills 42,000 men each year. This comprehensive guide provides the latest information about symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options as well as practical advice about coping with the healthcare system, insurance providers, and the emotional aspects of the disease. Considerations of risk are supported by valuable discussions and statistics. Medical alphabet soup is made palatable with definitions and a glossary. An excellent title. (*LJ* 11/15/04)

BECKER, SUZY. *I Had Brain Surgery, What's Your Excuse? An Illustrated Memoir.* Workman. 282p. illus. ISBN 0-7611-2478-0. \$19.95. Becker, a best-selling author, artist, and entrepreneur, underwent surgery for a brain tumor. This remarkable chronicle of her diagnosis, treatment, and recovery, illustrated with witty charts and drawings, will inspire patients and their families. Her story runs the gamut, from the frightening event that left her temporarily disabled to her return to full function in a 500-mile bikeathon. Becker's dry humor and universal truths are just what the doctor ordered. (*LJ* 2/15/04)

LUCAS, GERALYN. *Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy.* St. Martin's. 208p. ISBN 0-312-33445-1. \$23.95. At the age of 27, Lucas (now director of original programming at Lifetime Television) was not the typical breast cancer patient. This intensely personal account of her diagnosis, treatment, recovery, and postchemotherapy pregnancy explores her fears and chronicles her transformation as she discovers what it means to be a young breast cancer survivor in a beauty-obsessed culture. (*LJ* 9/1/04)

PATT, RICHARD B., M.D. SUSAN S. LANG. *The Complete Guide to Relieving Cancer Pain and Suffering.* rev. ed. Oxford Univ. 446p. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-19-513501-6. \$35. Most cancer patients fear pain more than death. This manual by Patt, head of the Patt Center for Cancer Pain and Wellness, and Lang, a science writer, will reassure them. It explains pain medications, new interventions such as implantable pumps and nerve blocks, and alternative therapies such as biofeedback and relaxation techniques. The authors stress the importance of

adequate treatment and note that the use of drugs will not lead to addiction in those who are not predisposed to it. This information will be useful for people young and old who live with chronic pain. (LJ 6/1/04)

POCHAPIN, MARK BENNETT, M.D. What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Colorectal Cancer: New Tests, New Treatments, New Hope. Warner. 281p. ISBN 0-446-53188-X \$25.95; pap. ISBN 0-446-69412-6. \$14.95. Pochapin, medical director of the Jay Monahan Center for Gastrointestinal Health, New York, tells readers about the importance of screening for colorectal cancer, as well as how to prevent it and how to treat it (if found early and addressed, 90 percent of cases are curable). He notes that this disease affects men and women at the same rate and that most cases are not hereditary. This excellent guide also includes a list of resource organizations, a glossary, and references. (LJ 3/15/04)

SCHWARTZ, ANNA L. Cancer Fitness: Exercise Programs for Patients and Survivors. Fireside: S & S. 283p. illus. index. ISBN 0-7432-3801-X. pap. \$13. Nurse, cancer survivor, and record-holding cyclist Schwartz offers a detailed guide to exercise for cancer patients. She explains the mental and physical benefits of exercise and gives instructions and examples of aerobic and strength-building routines suitable for men and women of all ages. A foreword by Lance Armstrong provides extra inspiration. A unique title covering both the science and the sweat of working out. (LJ 7/04)

SILVER, MARC. Breast Cancer Husband: How To Help Your Wife (and Yourself) Through Diagnosis, Treatment, and Beyond. Rodale. 336p. ISBN 1-57954-833-4. pap. \$14.95. Husbands and partners are usually the odd men out in books on breast cancer. Silver, an editor at *U.S. News & World Report*, didn't know what to do when his wife was diagnosed. Finding no books specifically from his perspective, he decided to write one. Gleaning information from medical professionals and other men in his position, he created a helpful guide that covers all manner of providing support, even down to instructions for washing a woman's hair while she has drains in place. Silver's *Husband* is funny, tender, and rock-solid. (LJ 9/1/04)

WELCH, H. GILBERT, M.D. Should I Be Tested for Cancer? Maybe Not and Here's Why. Univ. of California. 224p. index. ISBN 0-520-23976-8. \$19.95. Though early detection is the mantra of cancer prevention, Welch, professor of family and community medicine at Dartmouth College, thinks it just might be a double-edged sword. Screening tests are obviously helpful, but at the same time they can miss some cancers and lead to invasive and unnecessary procedures and treatments. This thought-provoking book offers a unique perspective on cancer screening.

Caregiving

CAPOSSELA, CAPPY SHEILA WARNOCK. Share the Care: How To Organize a Group To Care for Someone Who Is Seriously Ill. rev. ed. Fireside: S. & S. 348p. index. ISBN 0-7432-6268-9. pap. \$14. Caring for someone who is seriously ill is a daunting task, but this guide, originally published in 1995, provides a framework for forming a group to undertake it. *Share the Care* discusses what caregivers may need to do for the patient and how they can maintain their own mental and physical well-being in the process. It includes useful checklists as well as an extensive resource list. (LJ 10/15/04)

Children's Health

GARABEDIAN, HELEN. Itsy Bitsy Yoga: Poses To Help Your Baby Sleep Longer, Digest Better, and Grow Stronger. Fireside: S. & S. 236p. illus. index. ISBN 0-7432-4355-2. pap. \$16. With yoga increasing in popularity, it is small wonder that a creative facilitator has adapted it for babies. Garabedian, a certified yoga instructor and developmental movement educator, has developed a series of yoga postures that parents or caregivers can do with infants from newborns through toddlers; the photographs and instructions are intended to ensure safe practice. These activities also encourage parent-child bonding and relaxation and are seen as an improvement over more regimented exercise routines. A novel approach. (LJ 4/15/04)

Drugs

ANGELL, MARCIA, M.D. The Truth About the Drug Companies: How They Deceive Us and What To Do About It. Random. 352p. ISBN 0-375-50846-5. \$24.95. The former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* looks at the pharmaceutical industry and examines its ties to academia and the Federal Drug Administration. She also addresses recent prescription drug legislation and explains why the drug companies rather than patients will be the beneficiaries. (LJ 7/04)

Elder Care

FREDRIKSON, ERIC. *How To Avoid Falling: A Guide for Active Aging and Independence.* Firefly. 128p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 1-55407-019-8. \$19.95; pap. ISBN 1-55407-015-5. \$12.95. Falls are a major cause of injury and disability among the elderly. Fredrikson, a Canadian accident prevention specialist who fell when he was 68 years old, has compiled a short but useful manual to help assess safety risks in the home. He also provides practical advice for fall-proofing, negotiating stairs, and avoiding hazardous situations such as uneven sidewalks, elevators, and escalators. He stresses the importance of physical fitness and provides gentle exercises. This book fills a genuine need in health collections. (LJ 10/1/04)

MARGOLIES, LUISA. *My Mother's Hip: Lessons from the World of Eldercare.* Temple Univ. 339p. illus. bibliog. index. ISBN 1-59213-237-5. \$66.50; pap. ISBN 1-59213-238-3. \$22.95. Hip fractures are a major source of serious disability among the elderly and often the beginning of a major decline in health. Margolies, clinical research director of the Hip Fracture Research Project of South Florida, recounts the story of her mother's fracture and subsequent journey through the healthcare system. Her book vividly portrays the system's flaws and raises important clinical and ethical issues concerning the care of our elders. (LJ 2/15/04)

MORRIS, VIRGINIA. *How To Care for Aging Parents.* rev. ed. Workman. 691p. index. ISBN 0-7611-3426-3. pap. \$18.95. First published in 1996, this helpful guide has been updated with almost 300 pages of new material. It covers all aspects of eldercare: home safety, the delicate issue of when to stop driving, nursing homes, dealing with healthcare institutions, ethical and legal concerns, and death and dying. The appendixes in the yellow pages contain directories of nonprofit and government agencies, nutrition data, a checklist for touring nursing homes, and funeral information. Parents and their children will appreciate this substantial text. (LJ 4/1/96)

Emergency Medicine

RAVAGE, BARBARA. *Burn Unit: Saving Lives After the Flames.* Da Capo. 302p. index. ISBN 0-306-81346-7. \$26. Burns are among the most devastating injuries that the body can sustain. Author Ravage follows two severely burned patients during their treatment at Bigelow 13, the Massachusetts General Hospital burn unit. She discusses the history of burn treatment and provides a look at the intense, physically grueling work of the dedicated staff as they care for these critically injured victims. A riveting account for all collections. (LJ 5/1/04)

General Medicine

GAVIN, JAMES R., M.D. WITH SHERRYE LANDRUM. *Dr. Gavin's Health Guide for African Americans: How To Keep Yourself and Your Children Well. Small Steps: American Diabetes Assn., dist. By McGraw-Hill.* 278p. illus. index. ISBN 1-58040-204-6. pap. \$14.95. Gavin, president of Morehouse College School of Medicine, provides a thorough overview of the major health problems facing African Americans and puts forth sound advice for treating and preventing them. Specifically addressing obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease, Gavin emphasizes exercise, a healthy diet, and stress reduction. He also encourages parents to teach their children healthy habits to prevent these diseases in the next generation. This excellent information would be valuable for anyone interested in better health. (LJ 6/1/04)

KERR, TREENA GRAHAM KERR. *Charting a Course to Wellness: Creative Ways of Living with Heart Disease and Diabetes.* American Diabetes Assn., dist. By McGraw-Hill. 291p. index. ISBN 1-58040-198-8. pap. \$18.95. Graham Kerr, of *Galloping Gourmet* fame, and his wife, Treena, used to eat rich, unhealthy foods that elevated their cholesterol and blood sugar. When Treena had a heart attack and a stroke and then developed type 2 diabetes, the Kerrs decided to change their lifestyle. They tell their story and explain how they made small, positive corrections that led to major health improvements. By using food preference sheets, they show users how to develop an enjoyable and healthy diet. The couple include 430 delicious recipes and spice mixes to help readers do the right thing. (LJ 6/15/04)

MARMOT, MICHAEL. *The Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity.* Times Bks: Holt. 320p. bibliog. index. ISBN 0-8050-7370-1. \$26. Epidemiologist Marmot (University College, London) supplies evidence from several studies that demonstrates the relationship between social status and health. Those of lower status have poorer health. By studying British civil servants, he learned that those with greater control over their lives and more opportunity for social activities were healthier than their peers. A fascinating thesis, whether you're upstairs or downstairs. (LJ 7/04)

THOMAS, PAT. *Under the Weather: How Weather and Climate Affect Our Health.* Fusion: Vision, dist. by Independent Pubs. Group. 257p. bibliog. index. ISBN 1-904132-30-8. pap. \$15.95. Building on the belief that weather affects our health, Thomas, a psychotherapist and science writer, provides some scientific evidence that barometric pressure, temperature, the sun, the moon, and various meteorological phenomena may influence pain, allergies, and other ailments. She supplies references to the medical literature and advice to ease weather-induced suffering. A valuable addition to natural medicine shelves. (LJ 6/1/04)

Personal Narrative

DAVIS, AMELIA. *My Story: A Photographic Essay on Life with Multiple Sclerosis.* Demos Medical Pub. 112p. photogs. ISBN 1-932603-01-8. pap. \$19.95. One of the approximately 350,000 Americans living with multiple sclerosis, award-winning photographer Davis interviewed and photographed 32 others for this book. The portraits of an ethnically diverse group, ranging from 17 to 70, demonstrate a wide variety of coping skills, creativity, and responses to the disease. An essential volume for MS sufferers and those who love them. (LJ 5/1/04)

Weight Loss

LEVINE, PATT MICHELE BONTEMPO-SARAY. *Eating Well After Weight Loss Surgery: Over 140 Delicious Low-Fat, High-Protein Recipes To Enjoy in the Weeks, Months and Years After Surgery.* Marlowe: Avalon, dist. by Publishers Group West. 193p. index. ISBN 1-56924-453-7. pap. \$16.95. Following bariatric surgery in 2003, food writer Levine wanted to feed herself and her family well, so she created a group of interesting and appetizing recipes that can be puréed for consumption during the postoperative period. The results are high-protein, low-fat, good-carbohydrate meals that will appeal to anyone trying to lose weight. Levine also describes the various weight-loss surgeries and includes nutritional advice from a dietitian. (LJ 9/1/04)

Women's Health

CLARK, REBECCA A., M.D. OTHERS. *A Woman's Guide to Living with HIV Infection.* Johns Hopkins. 314p. index. ISBN 0-8018-7913-2. \$45; pap. ISBN 0-8018-7914-0. \$15.95. Approximately 25 percent of all American HIV patients are women. Internist Clark, obstetrician/gynecologist Robert Maupin, and psychologist Jill Hayes Hammer present this accessible, reassuring guide to help women adjust to living with this treatable but still incurable infection. They include information about the diagnosis, the latest treatment options, sexual and reproductive concerns, psychological issues, childcare, and how to participate in research studies. Appendixes feature a resource guide and a form for tracking medications. The most complete and up-to-date consumer resource. (LJ 3/15/04)

FREUND, ROBERT, M.D. WITH ALEXANDER VAN DYNE. *Cosmetic Breast Surgery: A Complete Guide to Making the Right Decision—from A to Double D.* Marlowe: Avalon, dist. by Publishers Group West. 220p. illus. index. ISBN 1-56924-455-3. pap. \$14.95. A book exclusively devoted to cosmetic surgery of the breast is unique. This title covers breast reduction, breast augmentation, postmastectomy reconstruction, and revision of previous unsuccessful procedures, with a detailed description of what a surgeon can and cannot accomplish. Freund, a New York City-based plastic surgeon, offers thorough, objective information about silicone implants as well as thoughtful insights on the psychology of the breast. A concise guide for every health collection. (LJ 6/15/04)

LAHITA, ROBERT G., M.D. INA YALOF. *Women and Autoimmune Disease: The Mysterious Ways Your Body Betrays Itself.* Regan Bks: HarperCollins. 288p. index. ISBN 0-06-008149-X. \$25.95. Autoimmune diseases are difficult to diagnose and hard to treat. The majority (80 percent) of those affected are women. Lahita, a professor of medicine at Mount Sinai Medical School, and medical writer Yalof explain the physiology of the immune system and cover 15 autoimmune diseases as well as three related conditions—fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and silicone implant syndrome. They discuss diagnosis and treatment, including alternative therapies, using case histories to illustrate. The book has a glossary and a suggested reading list. Though possibly challenging to lay readers, this authoritative text puts forth an effective picture of these baffling illnesses. (LJ 8/04)

Author Information

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