



Primary and Secondary Preventive Nutrition, edited by Adrienne Bendich and Richard J Deckelbaum, 2001, 465 pages, hardcover, \$125. Humana Press Inc, Totowa, NJ.

This book is the latest volume in a series edited by Adrienne Bendich and Richard Deckelbaum. Their first book, *Preventive Nutrition: The Comprehensive Guide for Health Professionals*, appeared in 1997; a second edition followed in 2001. This book extends the content of those volumes to cover secondary as well as primary prevention of diet-related conditions such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and osteoporosis. Overall, the multiauthored chapters, although focused exclusively on prevention, are similar in style and content to those in the *Annual Review of Nutrition*.

The present volume is organized into 24 chapters written by one or more authors and grouped into sections on various disease conditions and critical issues such as ethnicity, micronutrient deficiencies, nutrition in medical education, and the economic benefits of prevention. The book also lists recent books and websites related to its themes.

Books of this type are only as good as their authors, and in this case the standard is high. The research reviews are rigorous, balanced, and critical. I especially liked Vermunt and Mensink's chapter on *trans* fatty acids ("The underlying mechanisms for these effects are not exactly known"), the review by Allison et al on genetic compared with environmental causes of obesity ("if we are to be responsive to the obesity problem . . . the environment must be changed to become less obesogenic and more promoting of healthy diets and activity patterns"), and Underwood's compelling case for "contextually appropriate and affordable" vitamin A interventions that involve the poor and women as partners in every aspect of planning and implementation. Kumanyika and Krebs-Smith provide a thoughtful analysis of the limitations—and political sensitivity—of dietary intake data parsed by ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Lands's chapter on the "balancing act" of alcohol recommendations explains why it is so difficult to determine the risks and benefits of moderate drinking when much of the evidence "is indirect and imprecise at this time." In short, many of the chapters in this book are well worth reading.

With that said, many of the chapters are also highly technical, densely written, and likely to be accessible only to specialists and graduate students. The most annoying feature of these chapters is the frequent use of abbreviations; these are defined at their first mention but tax memory when a single paragraph may contain a dozen. Dickenson blessedly includes a glossary of the 24 (!) abbreviations she uses to explain how health claims are regulated; the entire book needs such a glossary.

Reading the chapters as a whole is an interesting experience; taken together, they make a strong case for the importance of plant-based diets to health. Although many chapters review the effects of single nutrients on disease risk, they typically conclude that individual dietary components or supplements cannot

replace the benefits of fruit and vegetables. Overall, the book is a useful reference. Whether it is worth its exorbitant price is another matter, especially in comparison with the much lower cost of the *Annual Reviews*.

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Preventive Nutrition, the Comprehensive Guide for Health Professionals, 2nd ed, edited by Adrienne Bendich and Richard J Deckelbaum, 2001, 520 pages, hardcover, \$99.50. Humana Press Inc, Totowa, NJ.

This update of the first edition of this book, which was published in 1997, follows a format in most of its 21 chapters of reviewing the literature, including the scientific efforts of the chapter authors, illustrating data by the use of tables and figures, and providing a set of bottom-line recommendations. Each chapter is well referenced. Organized into 6 parts of 3–5 chapters each, the topics covered include cancer, cardiovascular disease, health outcomes of other major diseases, pregnancy and infancy, global prevention, and resources (64 books and 24 websites including those of journals).

Many of the tables consist of lists and descriptions of studies in the discipline (animal and observational studies and clinical trials) that are referenced so that the reader can go directly to the sources and personally assess the evidence from the original data. The topics thus covered include homocysteine; folic acid and birth defects; cancers of the colon, stomach, and lung; childhood cancers; age-related macular degeneration; and preterm deliveries. The tables of the anticarcinogenic phytochemicals in fruit and vegetables are useful. A common theme in these tables is the need for more placebo-controlled human intervention trials.

On the basis of the evidence they provide, the authors recommend a return to the Paleolithic diet to prevent colon cancer and a cessation of smoking to prevent lung cancer because no diet will overcome that risk factor. The chapter on osteoporosis provides practical recommendations to increase calcium intake via low-fat dairy products and calcium-fortified foods and to increase vitamin D intake. Other findings presented in the book are 1) that the data do not support a relation between iron intake and heart disease; 2) that 5 servings per day of fruit and vegetables prevent

cancer, heart disease, and perhaps age-related macular degeneration; reduce the incidence of birth defects; and stimulate the immune system; 3) that diminished immune function associated with aging can be improved in 6–12 mo with over-the-counter multivitamin supplements, even in the absence of any nutritional deficiency; 4) that vitamin A supplementation in developing countries favorably affects childhood mortality, especially from diarrheal diseases, and improves the outcome for patients with malaria, tuberculosis, and measles; 5) that the use of multivitamin supplements by Hungarian teenagers results in a decrease in congenital anomalies and neural tube defects; 6) that damage to sperm DNA, which results in birth defects, can be prevented by fortification of food with micronutrients, cessation of smoking, and limitation of alcohol intake; 7) that prenatal ingestion of polyunsaturated fatty acids improves brain and eye function in premature infants; and 8) that α -linolenic acid is important in infant formulas. The book also contains important global percep-

tions of the Western diet and disease relation, which include the increase in childhood obesity in Asia and the association of increased rates of death from coronary artery disease and stroke in Japan with increased serum cholesterol concentrations.

For their next edition, the editors should consider including more book resources on aging and health promotion and listing both academic programs that provide education and training in preventive nutrition and professional societies or foundations that support the field of nutrition in health promotion and disease prevention. This book is recommended for the health professional as a readable, concise resource for up-to-date information.

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