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Book Review

Simon Barton

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“Sexually Transmitted Diseases” by Dr. Lisa Marr : review by Dr. Simon E. Barton

This is a book aimed at the general public and according to the front cover should enable the reader to ‘protect yourself from STDs’.

However, the book appears like a textbook, both in design, size and typeface, and in lack of illustrations, which will make it less attractive to the general public. A straw poll of 3 lay readers confirmed that this is an immediate barrier to achieving its aim.

In terms of facts it is accurate but in many ways negative about encouraging screening. For instance, under the section Page 181: *Testing for Gonorrhoea*, it refers to swabs needing to be taken from men and women and only passingly refers to the use of urine testing (similarly for chlamydia on Page 138). The way it is written really does not make it user friendly, or encourage anyone asymptomatic to have a test.

The book includes a lot of esoteric information that might add to the academic weight of the book and certainly its length, but it really is not relevant to the majority of people who might wish to read it. Sections on chancroid, Donovanosis and Reiter’s disease are really unnecessary if the book is intended to inform patients about sexually transmitted diseases, and encourage and improve public health.

Dr. Marr is to be congratulated on this book, which I am sure will be very useful for teaching medical students and other health care workers. However, if its principal aim is intended to (as it says in the Introduction): “*enable readers to make smart decisions about sex*”, the information is too complex, the message is too convoluted and the lack of sheer fun in the book contrasts sharply with books like *The Sex Book* by Suzi Godson, or other books intended for the general public. Indeed, many web sites like bbc.co.uk have health pages which have equivalent information presented in a much more accessible format, and which are likely to be more accessible and influential, particularly in the lives of young people.

Dr Simon Barton

Consultant Physician and Clinical Director
HIV/Genitourinary Medicine Services