



## Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause

By The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. Boston: Touchstone, 2006. 368 pages. \$15.00, softcover.

Reviewed by: Barbara Boehler, CNM, MSN.

*Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause* provides the same style of unbiased clear advice that the groundbreaking *Our Bodies, Ourselves* did 37 years ago. Like its predecessor, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause* aims to empower women to make choices about their bodies and their health care by providing even-handed information from both the conventional and complementary medicine worlds. Women's lived experiences of the menopausal transition provide personal insights to the issues surrounding aging in general and menopause in particular. Throughout the book, the attitude of the normalcy of menopause as a part of women's experience is upheld and is put into the context of political and societal realities.

This is not a "how to" book on menopause. Instead, it is a gentle tour of the changes many women experience before and after menopause. The authors frame menopause as a normal evolution in a woman's biology and her emotional life. They reject the definition of menopause as a deficiency that may result in medicalization. However, there is an unbiased overview of hormone therapy's role in menopause. The book provides a basic overview of the common symptoms experienced with menopause: sleeplessness, hot flashes, and sexual changes. It also tackles the larger health issues that may accompany menopause, such as bone and heart health, memory and mood changes, and uterine and bladder health. The book ends with an in-depth exploration of the ways in which politics impacts women's health and how to increase women's power in the women's health arena. Although the information presented is directed at women experiencing menopause, the book has valuable references following each chapter that may also be helpful to clinicians.

What sets this book apart from other consumer books on menopause is the respect for women's lived experience and real understanding that women's experience can best be understood in context. Women's experiences of their bodies are viewed through the lens of each woman's socioeconomic status, her profession, her sexual preferences, and the way in which her community views her as a woman. This book suggests that women's experience of this transition time in their lives does not stand separate from the same societal and political factors that influence choices in birth and their outcomes. The explanation of the political, ethnic, racial and socioeconomic

influences on women's experience of menopause is the book's strength.

The chapter on health care decisions is also outstanding. It gives readers information on how to make informed health care choices that are not overly influenced by corporate marketing. It covers issues of ageism and medicalization and again reaffirms the normal process of menopause. The role of research and its evaluation as well as good sources for health care information are provided to the reader. A checklist to evaluate possible treatment options is very useful. Finally, the information regarding choosing a provider is excellent, as is the section on what to ask your provider and how to prepare for a provider visit. The chapter ends with a call to reform the entire medical system to provide quality of care as well as health care access.

The final section of the book addresses the way in which politics affects everyone's choices about health care options. This section points out that all of women's health care options are run through the filter of how post-menopausal women are generally viewed, and the fact that health care is focused on cures for disease rather than prevention. The way in which health care dollars are spent is political in nature and affects all women. By 2010, 33 million women will reach menopausal age. The editors point out that this is a large enough group to influence health care politics. They provide the reader with resources to become informed about political action and to join efforts to make changes that result in increased equity and access for all women to quality health care.

*Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause* is an excellent addition to any clinician's library for its overview of menopause, its affirmation of the normalcy of this life transition, and its excellent illumination of the political and societal influences on women's lived experience of this time of their life.

## Williams Manual of Obstetrics: Pregnancy Complications, 22nd Edition

By Kenneth Leveno, F. Gary Cunningham, James Alexander, Steven Bloom, Brian Casey, Jodi Dashe, Jeanne Sheffield, and Scott Roberts. New York: McGraw-Hill Medical, 2007. 598 pages. \$39.95, softcover.

Reviewed by: Margaret A. Plumbo, CNM, MS.

If you've ever wished you could have *Williams Obstetrics* in your lab coat pocket, now you can. Guidelines and clinical advisories change quickly, so every care provider needs a quick reference, and this "little bit larger than