

Book Reviews

Frances Sizer and Eleanor Whitney. *Nutrition: Concepts and Controversies*, 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth 2002. £32.99 (paperback). pp. 578. ISBN 0 534 57799 7

This book is a well-written introductory text that presents the fundamental concepts of human nutrition in a very readable and understandable style. The authors assume a limited scientific background making the text potentially accessible to a wide audience. All biological concepts are explained in full and most of the scientific terms used are defined in margins supporting the main text. In addition, the content of Chapter 3 provides the reader with an overview of the biological systems supported by clear coloured diagrams. The text proceeds to discuss the nutrients arranged in separate chapters to cover carbohydrates, lipids, protein, vitamins and the minerals. Subsequent chapters address energy balance and the relationship between diet and health. Chapter 10 focuses on the health benefits associated with regular physical activity. However, most chapters contain a short section entitled 'Think Fitness' where the reader is encouraged to consider adequate physical activity in addition to diet as a key component affecting health. This integrated approach to the chapters is a consistent theme throughout the text providing a useful aid to learning. Chapters 11 and 12 consider nutrition over the life cycle. The penultimate chapter is entitled 'Food Safety and Food Technology' and includes topical sections on food additives and the use of pesticides. 'Hunger and the Global Environment' is the title of the final chapter. The text includes food composition tables, which are presented in an appendix.

The authors present information in a format whereby the reader is almost instructed through a course in making informed food choices. The book is written in a very informal style, which may complement the authors' aim that the text be interactive. Each chapter begins with a number of questions such as 'How much water should I drink each day?' and 'Is it possible to consume too much protein?'. These questions are then addressed within the text. In each chapter there are study exercises and assignments including some 'self-help' multiple-choice questions. Many of the assignments are orientated to allowing the reader to 'develop a feel for the nutrients in food'. This is supported by the inclusion of a CD-ROM providing additional assignments, study questions and hyperlinks to relevant web sites.

One of the strengths of the book is that each chapter ends with a 'Controversy' section. These sections serve to provide additional reading, conveniently following the more established information in the core text ('Concepts'). These sections discuss contemporary issues in nutrition including health benefits of alcohol, use of ergogenic aids and the role of functional foods. Some of these sections are well presented in the form of debates such as 'Controversy 6' entitled 'Vegetarians versus meat eaters: whose diet is best?' These sections are not only informative but

provide stimulating reading. However, 'Controversy 1' provides guidance on recognising the dubious nutritional information used to market food products. This is useful, but one cannot help but notice that the very cover of the book reads 'the Ninth Edition can help you do more than succeed in the course – it can help enhance your life!' Each chapter also has a section entitled 'Consumer Corner'. These sections give a concise informative summary on various topical issues such as the safety of irradiated foods and the use of sports drinks.

Information is supported by a reference list in an appendix, but the authors make no attempt to describe any key studies in the text. In addition, the book is weak in its description of nutrition research and surveillance. Some readers may find the style of the book almost patronising and the number of 'value added features' such as the assignments and exercises to be somewhat surplus to requirement. The book could easily be condensed while retaining its factual content. One may also question aspects relating to presentation. First, core information is highlighted as 'key points'. However, these are brief and scattered throughout the text. It would be more useful if these were grouped to provide chapter summaries. Second, the use of coloured headings and subheadings often hinders clarity. This extends to tables, all of which are presented with awful vivid yellow backgrounds. Finally, there are also too many florid and often pointless images of food. Should the book be read or eaten?

The book is competitively priced but its orientation is towards the US market, which may somewhat limit its suitability to target audiences in the UK. For example, differences between the US and UK regarding nutrition policy, dietary guidelines and food labelling are not addressed unlike in many UK texts. However, this remains a very readable textbook and contains some useful sections. It is therefore worth adding this book, as an introductory text, to the reading list of students undertaking non-clinical courses.

James O'Reilly
Health and Life Science Division
University College Northampton
Boughton Green Road
Northampton NN2 7AL UK
Email: James.Oreilly@northampton.ac.uk

DOI:10.1079/BJN/2003817

S. E. Byrom. *Pocket Guide to Nutrition and Dietetics*, Edinburgh, London, New York, Philadelphia, St Louis, Sydney and Toronto: Churchill Livingstone 2002. £16.99. pp. 189. ISBN 0 443 07136 5

This book has been written by a State Registered Dietitian who, having reflected on her training, has put together a