

Book Review

Management of Erectile Dysfunction in Primary Care Practice: Medical and Psychological Approaches

Dr Rosie King

The Written Word Pty Ltd (2004)

367 pp (no index)

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The management of men with erectile dysfunction (ED) has been the subject of a sea change over the last few years. Previous treatments emphasised the psychobehavioural (with resultant very low success rates), but with the advent of the phosphodiesterase inhibitors (PDE5Is), the treatment has become increasingly medicalised (and a lot more successful, if gaining an erection is the main criterion of success). There are now three PDE5Is on the market, along with injectable agents and more products to be made available in the near future. The marketing of these so-called 'lifestyle' drugs has been aggressive. 'Viagra' has entered the cultural lexicon, and primary care physicians (general practitioners or GPs) have been pushed to the front-line of treatment.

Unfortunately, though, there has been precious little good information for GPs which hasn't been tainted by the pharma companies. But now Sydney sexual health physician Dr Rosie King has come up with a gem of a guide book for those health professionals wanting to know more. At 367 pages there is a lot of information, but she makes it user-friendly by commencing with an introduction (which gives an overview, information on common causes, and details of the male sexual response), and then moving on to the 'Four-Step Plan'. This certainly makes the somewhat fraught (for the GP, at least) subject of ED a lot more comprehensible and a lot less threatening.

The Four-Step Plan involves the stages of detecting, evaluating, managing, and following-up. The author goes through each stage in impressive detail, but makes it easy-to-follow and to understand. The claims of the pharmaceutical companies about their PDE5Is are dissected and exposed to the hard glare of an evidence-based approach.

Liberal usage of diagrams and tables makes the wealth of data easy to digest. Humour is also used to good effect, such as this gem of a quote by a heart researcher regarding the dangers of extra-marital sex for the male:

'Heart beats stay at normal rate
When one beds down with legal mate,
But roosting in another's nest
Flirts with cardiac arrest.'

As well as the purely medical management of ED there is an excellent section on psychogenic ED and the assessment and management of this with cognitive and behavioural strategies. Those involved in treating patients will find this section particularly useful, as it is an area that is not covered succinctly in many other texts. Helpful summaries are also included.

The book is well referenced, with references appearing together at the end of the book. There are also 27 patient handouts which can be photocopied and given to patients and their partner(s).

There are some aspects of Dr King's book, however, that I feel could have been improved. There is no index, which is unusual in such a book, though the contents pages are comprehensive and this means that finding particular topics is not too difficult. Also, perhaps a bit too much attention is devoted to the pharma companies and their sometimes excessive claims about their respective products — the points (though well-made) are laboured somewhat.

Also lacking is a glossary. A large number of acronyms are found throughout the book, and those readers dipping into a chapter for some information may not be able to readily decipher the acronyms that occur frequently.

My quibbles, however, are not at all major, and should not detract from the fact that this is an impressive book written by someone with a great ability to communicate, and who also possesses a good command of the topic.

This book would be useful for GPs with an interest in men's health, as well as sexual health physicians and nurses, and those training to work in the field of sexual health. Those working in specialised areas such as urology, oncology, psychiatry/psychology, spinal cord injuries, or rehabilitation medicine would also find it useful.

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