

## BOOK REVIEWS

### DR RUTH'S GUIDE TO GOOD SEX

Ruth Westheimer Ph D: Warner Books Inc., New York, N.Y. 1983, xiii + 334 pages, with a recommended reading list and index.

Dr Ruth Westheimer began her studies in Psychology at the Sorbonne and holds a doctorate in Education from Columbia University and a master's degree in Sociology from the New School for Social Research. She is an adjunct Associate Professor in the Human Sexuality Teaching Programme at the New York Hospital - Cornell Medical Centre and has a private practice in psychotherapy with a specialization in the treatment of sexual dysfunctions. She is also a consultant at New York University - Bellevue Hospital Medical Centre, Division of Geriatric Medicine where Dr Helen Singer Kaplan, MD is the Director of the Human Sexuality Teaching Programme.

To quote Dr Kaplan who introduced this book, "Dr Ruth Westheimer has a wonderful talent for translating the new technical and scientific information about sex into practical advice. From her vastly popular radio show, *Sexually Speaking*, she has selected a variety of the typical questions and problems about sex that trouble and puzzle men and women of all ages and stations in life, and to those she gives sound and humane advice."

Dr Ruth emphasized that she wanted to promote that "A healthy attitude to one's own individual sex life is happy, sensible and imaginative attitude, to one's own individual sex life is happy, sensible and imaginative attitude, free from peer pressure and free from panic and despair". She acknowledged that "basically I am an over-protective mother" with two children. She has a lot of "don'ts", e.g. "Not to have sex without contraception unless they want babies and are ready for them" and "Not to offend your family or religion if you can reasonably avoid it - and often you can".

The age-specific, sexually-related topics covered in this book varies from "Parents and Teenagers", "That First Time" to "Sex and the Elderly". The

topics range from the myth of the fantastic every-time orgasm to sexually transmittable diseases. It has a chapter on "Sex and the Disabled" and another on "Gay Sex". What I consider the unique features of this book in contrast to many other books on sex available in an American supermarket book stand is its discussions on "Relationships" (Chapter 17) and the question, "Am I Normal?" (Chapter 21).

Recognising that this is primarily a book written for Americans, we have to be aware that some Malaysians may not share some of the cultural values expressed by Dr Ruth. Generally, I would recommend this book to all medical personnels and staff connected with family planning. For any energetic medical practitioners, psychologists or nurses, you may even start with the last chapter, "Your Sexual I. Q.". Dr Ruth has provided the correct answers - with explanation at the end of every statement in the text.

T. H. WOON

### PREVENTION IN CHILDHOOD OF HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ADULT LIFE

F. Falkner: WHO, Geneva, 1980, 135 pages.

The ultimate objective of procreation is to have children who will become healthy and happy adults. To achieve this objective, one should focus on children's health since the health of the child is the key to the health of the adult.

In recent years, remarkable progress has been made in the prevention and treatment of childhood diseases. However, only a relatively small proportion of the world's children have benefitted from this. In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, infant and childhood morbidity remains high and those who survive, because of a whole host of adverse environmental conditions, become victims of ill health and fail to develop to their full potential. The challenge of today is to bridge the gap between existing scientific knowledge and

technology, and their application to stimulate programmes for the benefit of children all over the world.

This book highlights the view that preconceptional factors and conditions during fetal life and early infancy profoundly influence the physical and psycho-social development of the child and ultimately the health of the adult. It is concerned with the promotion of health through the application of known measures for the prevention or treatment of diseases in the first crucial years of life in order to prevent long-term sequelae. It is also concerned with the impact of a person's health during the early years (including the prenatal period) upon his or her later health as a parent and family member, and thus upon future generations. It highlights numerous areas in which practical preventive and curative action can be taken today to improve

maternal and child health and the health of the family as a whole in the spirit of primary health care.

It also draws attention to areas where further knowledge is needed such as the antecedents in childhood of some disabling diseases prevalent among adults in order to devise appropriate means of timely prevention.

This book is an important book that should be studied by all who are interested in the health planners, doctors (especially paediatricians, obstetricians, general practitioners, psychiatrists), dental surgeons, maternal and child health and school health personnel, health education officers, nutritionists and social workers.

*S. T. CHEN*