



BOOKS

Natural Prozac: Learning to Release Your Body's Own Anti-Depressants

Joel C. Robertson and Tom Monte. 215 pp. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., New York; HarperCollins Canada Ltd., Toronto. 1997. \$32.50. ISBN 0-06-251353-2

Overall rating:	Good
Strengths:	Clearly written and easy to understand
Weaknesses:	Downplays the role of medication in the treatment of depression, which may lead patients to delay seeking medical help or to discontinue treatment prematurely; some of the program plans are not substantiated
Audience:	Patients with mild symptoms of depression or in remission who do not require drug treatment

Natural Prozac is a useful layperson's guide to understanding and modifying the factors that may trigger or perpetuate mild depressive symptoms. These modifiable factors include activity level, dietary habits, lifestyle behaviour as well as thoughts and emotional responses. These factors are causally linked to "chemical imbalances" of 3 main neurotransmitters in the brain: dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin. Each neurotransmitter is responsible for various states of mental functioning. Serotonin is linked to "peace, concentration and well-being"; dopamine is responsible for "alertness, energy and aggression"; and norepinephrine is involved in "speeding up your thoughts." Alteration in the levels of each is postulated to cause malfunction of the brain and to produce an overly passive "satiating" or an overly active "arousal." Corresponding de-

pressive symptoms may result when triggered by 1 or more of the modifiable risk factors. Genetic, generational or conditional and situational factors are used to explain the underlying mechanisms.

To explain the effect of neurotransmitters in an easy-to-understand way, the authors use lay terms such as "gas and brake pedals." Some concepts may be misleading and even harmful to certain patients who require continuing drug treatment. For example, references to "ending depression — safely and permanently" and to "start[ing] to taper off medication gradually" may be taken out of context by some readers. Simple outlines of the criteria from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* are given for self-assessment of serious or suicidal depression. Situations that may trigger symptoms are well outlined with the use of case histories.

Part of the book describes "programs for healing depression," including very specific diets and exercises to "boost the levels" of each of the neurotransmitters. Entertainment, play-acting, writing techniques and spiritual and religious practices are recommended in the context of structured daily and weekly plans for each personality type.

The book ends with a mail-in "mood optimization survey." For a fee of US\$59.95 (plus tax, shipping and handling, minus a \$20 discount for purchasing the book), a 35- to 40-page personalized report on the reader will be prepared.

The book makes indirect references to scientific studies, but there is no formal reference list or bibliography. The cover, foreword and introduction tend to exaggerate claims of "scientific proof" and the "remarkable effectiveness" of the methods for "every depression sufferer." However,

there is little or no supporting evidence to substantiate these claims.

Natural Prozac is easy to read, with simple, clear vocabulary. It may be recommended for patients who have only mild symptoms of depression or are in remission. Symptoms may be attenuated in motivated readers who can modify clearly identifiable lifestyle or personality factors. However, care and caution must be exercised in regard to those who need continuing drug therapy. The book may create a false sense of security, leading those with serious or recurrent symptoms to avoid seeking medical help or to discontinue therapy prematurely.

Kiran Rabheru, BSc, MD
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
University of Western Ontario
Director
Geriatric Psychiatry Unit
London Psychiatric Hospital
London, Ont.

House Calls, Rounds, and Healings: A Poetry Casebook

David L. Schiedermayer. 190 pp. Illust. Galen Press, Tucson, Ariz. 1996. US\$12.95. ISBN 1-883620-17-1

Overall rating:	Excellent
Strengths:	Brief, true to experience, readable and free from clichés
Weaknesses:	None
Audience:	Medical students, residents and practitioners as well as other health care workers

This collection of poems is part of an excellent series of books published by Galen Press on such widely divergent subjects as ethics, medical education, emergency medicine and death and dying.



Dr. Schiedermayer's musings are not mere whimsy — they have pertinacity and the “jolt of a mule's kick.” They do not “dress up” his medical practice, which has extended from the University of Wisconsin to West Africa and to Navajo reservations in the US southwest.

The author's philosophical cut reminds one of Sir William Osler's description of a colleague whose outlook was “sloping to the sunny side.”

The illustrations are remarkable, droll and very apropos. They are chosen from famous and not-so-famous pen-and-ink drawings of the past.

All told, this little gathering of an observant clinician's poems is a beguiling and sympathetic view of our profession and its daily encounters.

William C. Gibson, MD, DPhil
Victoria, BC

Books and other media received

Livres et autres documents reçus

Books for patients

Aujourd'hui, la mort. Serge Bureau. 296 pp. Les Éditions Fides, Montréal (Qué.). 1996. Prix non mentionné. ISBN 2-7621-1914-6

St. John Ambulance Guide to First Aid and CPR. Rev. ed. St. John Ambulance. Illust. Times Books, New York/Random House of Canada, Ltd., Mississauga. 1996. \$23.95. ISBN 0-679-30820-2

Endocrinology

Essential Endocrinology. 3rd ed. John F. Laycock and Peter H. Wise. 409 pp. Illust. Oxford University Press, Oxford,

England; Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, Ont. 1996. \$50. ISBN 0-19-262-472-5

Ethics

Au pays de la bioéthique: L'éthique biomédicale aux États-Unis. Hubert Doucet. Série *Le champ éthique*, no. 29. Rédacteur : Éric Fuchs. 217 pp. Labor et Fides, Genève; Fides, St-Laurent (Qué.). 1996. Prix non mentionné. ISBN 2-8309-0819-8

Coerced Contraception? Moral and Policy Challenges of Long-Acting Birth Control. Edited by Ellen H. Moskowitz and Bruce Jennings. *Hastings Center Studies in Ethics* series. Series editors, Mark J. Hanson and Daniel Callahan. 225 pp. Washington. 1996. US\$45. ISBN 0-87840-624-7

Gastroenterology

Gastrointestinal Bleeding. Edited by Neville Krasner. 352 pp. Illust. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$210.95 (\$175.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-1008-6

Genetics

Color Atlas of Genetics. Eberhard Pasarge. 411 pp. Illust. Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany; Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc., New York. 1995. US\$29. ISBN 0-86577-587-7

Health care

Partnering and Health Development: The Kathmandu Connection. Melville Kerr. 250 pp. Illust. University of Calgary Press, Calgary; International Development Research Centre, Ottawa. 1996. \$27.95. ISBN 0-88936-819-8

The Human Genome Project and the Future of Health Care. Edited by

Thomas H. Murray, Mark A. Rothstein and Robert F. Murray, Jr. *Medical Ethics Series*. David H. Smith and Robert M. Veatch. 248 pp. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1996. US\$29.95. ISBN 0-253-33213-3

History

The Quintessential Canadian Anaesthetist — Wesley Bourne: A Retrospective on the Foundations of McGill Anesthesia. Joan C. Bevan and Maria A. Pacelli. *Fontanus Monograph Series*. no. 10. Series editor, Hans Möller. 138 pp. Illust. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal. 1996. \$45. ISBN 0-7717-0485-2

HIV/AIDS

AIDS: A Moral Issue — The Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects. 2nd ed. Edited by Brenda Almond. 162 pp. St. Martin's Press, New York. 1996. US\$39.95, hardcover; US\$17.95, paperback. ISBN 0-312-16152-2, hardcover; ISBN 0-312-16153-0, paperback

Pediatrics

The Good Pediatrician: An Ethics Curriculum for Use in Canadian Pediatrics Residency Programs — Teacher's Handbook. Edited by Abbyann Lynch. 348 pp. Pediatric Ethics Network (PedEthNet) via Department of Bioethics, The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto. 1996. \$50. ISBN 0-9690091-4-3

Surgery

Abdominal Access in Open and Laparoscopic Surgery. Edited by Edmund K.M. Tsoi and Claude H. Organ, Jr. 194 pp. Illust. Wiley-Liss, Inc., New York. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$110.95 (\$94.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-471-13352-3