



The Shelter of Each Other: Rebuilding Our Families

Mary Pipher. 281 pp. Random House of Canada. 1997. \$17.95. ISBN 0-345-40603-6

Overall rating:	Excellent
Strengths:	Readable
Weaknesses:	Clinicians seeking a method or elaboration of a method may be disappointed in the narrative approach to case-work
Audience:	Patients, clinicians, health care professionals who work with patients and families

In *The Shelter of Each Other*, Mary Pipher tells us: "We all can make a difference by simply sharing our own stories with real people in real times and places."

Dr. Pipher has organized some of her stories into a guidebook for families besieged by our fast-paced, media-conscious culture. This is a hopeful book that offers solutions for distressed families and for anyone who is trying to strengthen these families or build a community. She sets out to encourage discussion about the needs of families, and this is well accomplished. Pipher tells tales about her natural family and the families she has treated, and outlines her philosophy of family life and community.

In the first of 3 parts, Pipher describes the crisis of our time in terms of the influence on families of an electronic community and consumerism. Next, she outlines how the needs of communities have changed in the course of this century. Finally, she speaks to the reader about solutions and, in particular, about the need for altruism in community-building.

This is an excellent book. I read it eagerly when it was first published in 1996, having already enjoyed and used her previous book,¹ *Reviving Ophelia*, in my practice. Pipher's storytelling style makes *The Shelter of*

Each Other an easy book for patients to read. Families in my practice have used it to find solutions for their difficulties, and this is a powerful recommendation for a book.

We live in a time when a television set has replaced a hearth. This is a book for those who, after years of "tuning in," realize that we now have to "tune out."

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Reference

1. Pipher M. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*. New York: Grosset/Putman; 1994.

Golden Years — Hidden Fears: Elder Abuse. A Handbook for Front-line Helpers Working with Seniors

Virginia Boyack. 82 pp. Kerby Centre, Calgary; 403 265-0661. 1997. \$24.95. ISBN 0-9681691-0-4

Overall rating:	Fair
Strengths:	Addresses an important, ubiquitous issue, of which there is not much literature
Weaknesses:	Does not provide a practical, evidence-based intervention model for physicians
Audience:	Individuals who work with senior citizens

This handbook describes an intervention for suspected elder abuse. It is based on a 3-year pilot project of the Kerby Centre, a multi-service agency in Alberta geared to meet the needs of people 60 years of age and over. The book is written for individuals from a "professional, semi-professional and volunteer background."

The first section provides background and definitions. Because it is aimed at such a broad audience, it must provide full detail for the least knowledgeable. This makes it a tedious read for those who currently work with the senior population. On the other hand, assumptions are not explicitly stated for the newcomer. For example, "indicators" may be warning signs for abuse but, in and of themselves, do not allow a conclusion of this, and must be interpreted in context. The knowledge and experience required to do this are not discussed.

The book's style (lists of items in short, descriptive numbered sentences) and length make it difficult to read. The key types of abuse are discussed. Results of studies are quoted as undisputed fact (e.g., "There are usually 35 reported incidents before a victim will finally bring the abuse to the attention . . ."). The discussion of legal issues is helpful, but is heavily based on Alberta legislation.

The second section describes the Kerby Centre model. The complexity of the intervention makes its applicability to non-resource rich agencies questionable. Tools are presented, but the validation data are not provided, nor are any "gold standards" given. In at least one instance (Appendix A-18, the SANIC), there are no instructions on how to interpret a tool with more than 100 items. In spite of its length, the model simplifies the complexity of diagnosis and intervention in elder abuse.

One section addresses cultural values and experiences, but it sidesteps the issue that what constitutes abuse in North American culture may not be perceived as such in other cultures. Finally, the part of the tool labelled "perpetrator assessment" makes the assumption that an individual is guilty of abuse until proven innocent.



This handbook is disappointing because it promises to address, in a practical manner, an area of vital importance to those who participate in the care of seniors. Unfortunately, it does not live up to this promise, and indeed may lead to labelling and irreparable damage being done to family units.

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Making Choices: Treatment of Stage IV (Metastatic) Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer. A Decision Aid for Patients

(Cassette tape and workbook). W.K. Evans, A.M. O'Connor, V. Fiset, J. Logan, C. DeGrasse. 1997. Price not stated. Available from Ottawa Civic Hospital Loeb Research Institute; 888 240-7002.

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Fills a need of patients with lung cancer as well as their physicians and other allied health professionals, in individualizing treatment for stage IV non-small cell lung cancer.
Weaknesses: None
Audience: Patients suffering from lung cancer, family physicians, oncologists, nurses working with cancer patients

Stage IV non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) is very common and historically has a poor prognosis. This cassette tape and workbook were produced to enable patients with advanced lung cancer to choose the most appropriate form of therapy for their situation. The booklet will guide patients in the choice between supportive care with radiation therapy

or supportive care with both radiation therapy and chemotherapy. This is one of the most important decisions a patient faces at a time of great stress. The booklet's clear language and use of icons and diagrams is helpful. The descriptions of cancer, radiation therapy and chemotherapy are easy to understand.

The Ontario Cancer Treatment Practice Guideline Initiative recently published a clinical practice guideline for chemotherapy in stage IV NSCLC.¹ The guideline states that there is evidence of a small survival benefit of cisplatin-based chemotherapy over best supportive care in patients with NSCLC (absolute benefit is 10% at 1 yr). Quality of life can also be improved with chemotherapy, but as yet there is only evidence from non-randomized trials. Therefore, there is a need for patients to be informed when they face the decision of the best treatment in their individual situation. Because the survival benefit is modest this booklet and cassette tape are a valuable tool. They could also be a model for other disease sites where the benefits of therapy are similar.

The instructions are clear; it would take 35 to 40 minutes to complete the tape while following along in the booklet. As a further aid, examples at the end illustrate 3 possible outcomes.

As newer chemotherapeutic agents, e.g., paclitaxel, are introduced, responses and median survivals are improving, but for now, this booklet is an invaluable aid for patients and their physicians.

Reference

1. Lopez GL, Stewart DJ, Newman TE, et al. Chemotherapy in stage IV (metastatic) non small cell lung cancer. *Cancer Prev Control* 1997;1:18-27.

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Healthy Eating for 2: Mother and Baby

Booklet. Edited by Alana LaPerle Consulting. 48 pp. Illust. Capital Health, Community Care and Public Health, Edmonton. 1996. Price not stated. Culturally adapted and translated into 6 other languages.

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Comprehensive and informative, written in plain language
Weaknesses: Some inaccuracies in the Mandarin and Cantonese translations; major problems with Vietnamese version; Spanish, Punjabi and Polish versions were not reviewed
Audience: Pregnant women and new mothers

Generally, this is an excellent resource, written in plain language and geared toward pregnant women and new mothers. The 3 topics are "Healthy eating for mother and baby," "Breastfeeding" and "Food for your infant."

The content is in keeping with Canada's Food Guides and with the soon-to-be-released (June '98) Perinatal Nutrition Guidelines from Health Canada. The content is general and solid. It should not be considered a reference for clinicians but rather for clients (patients).

The format is attractive; there are helpful illustrations, information in bullets and a question-and-answer section. The booklet includes practical tips and refers the reader to health professionals for further advice or assistance.

The Chinese and Mandarin versions have been adapted in a very culturally sensitive way. The information has been translated accurately, with a few minor exceptions.

In contrast, the Vietnamese version has major inaccuracies in both content, printing and cultural appropriateness. It should not be recommended for this group of newcomers.

Unfortunately, I cannot comment on the Punjabi, Polish or Spanish versions.