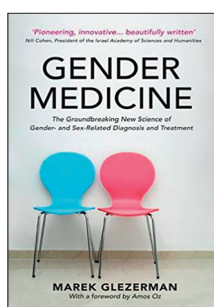


Life & Times Books

Gender Medicine: the Groundbreaking New Science of Gender- and Sex-Related Diagnosis and Treatment

Marek Glezerman

Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2017, PB,
320pp, £10.99, 978-0715652244



HEALTH CARE FOR THE GENDER NORMATIVE

This book expands on the basic principle that men and women are biologically destined to be different, performing different societal roles as a result of years of evolution. The author is a leading proponent of 'gender medicine', tailoring care to the needs of men and women separately.

In essence, it is the old 'nature or nurture' argument writ large. *Gender Medicine* comes down heavily on nature's side. Glezerman pays considerable attention to the role of genetics and epigenetics in developing personalised medicine. The difference in men's and women's physiology is emphasised. Chapters cover diverse subjects including gastrointestinal and heart disease, pain and thermoregulation.

The book is on relatively safe ground in recounting previous studies demonstrating demographic differences in illness presentation and severity. However, a fundamental flaw for me (acknowledging my perspective as a female GP and feminist) is that 'gender' is here dichotomised. The book is written with an underlying assumption that gender is binary, purely biological, and deterministic. Glezerman does acknowledge at an early stage that he uses the term 'gender' inaccurately to replace 'sex'. Yet, beyond this definition, the social construction of gender is glossed over in favour of an emphasis on neurobiology. Health inequalities in economic terms, gender identity, and emerging issues of the health care of transgender people are not explored.

The author is clear in stating that the book is a piece of popular science and not an academic treatise. It certainly appears idealistic in its view on delivery of 'personalised' medicine. However, it draws on an unproblematic biomedical model of gender. There is little doubt that men and women often experience health and illness differently, but the reasons why such differences are sustained are many and complex. In the GP world we inhabit, women still face sexism and violence, and transgender patients remain stigmatised. This book offers an intriguing premise, but those looking for a nuanced discussion of these complex issues will have to look further afield.

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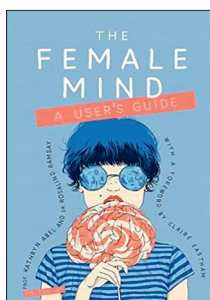
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp17X694289>

The Female Mind: a User's Guide

Kathryn Abel and Rosalind Ramsay

RCPsych Publications, 2017, PB, 128pp,
£13.99 (College members' price: £12.59),
978-1909726802



AN OVERVIEW OF THE HEALTH EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN

If you are looking to better understand the interface between physical and mental health and societal attitudes towards women, this book is an excellent place to start. *The Female Mind* consists of 35 short chapters on topics ranging from 'the history of the female mind' to 'sensitive

motherhood'. Specific disorders such as depression, PTSD, chronic pain, and addiction are considered in their own chapters.

As a woman and a GP registrar, I have (perhaps surprisingly) rarely consciously considered how the experiences of my female patients, both in terms of their illnesses and their social circumstances, may substantially differ from those of men, and may require a different approach. The chapters cleverly use cases to introduce this idea, before discussing the way in which women experience illness, treatments, and recovery, and how this impacts on the way healthcare services are currently, and perhaps should be, delivered. Thought provoking and insightful, this book is a prompt for further consideration of an increasingly talked about issue.

Particular strengths are the excellent tips, resources, and references at the end of each chapter. These offer excellent places to direct patients, family, and carers affected by issues in the book, and provide GPs with sources for further professional development.

Although some of the information (particularly that about different conditions) is quite technically basic, the way the book considers how illness specifically affects women in the wider societal context means it remains an informative read for GPs. This book would be particularly helpful for those without extensive medical training who work closely with women, such as social workers, support workers, or women's advisers.

Importantly, this book is not just for women but will be of interest to men who are curious about how life events and illness may be experienced by the opposite sex.

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