Book Reviews

The Practical Guide to Candida
by Jane McWhirter MA (Hons) DC MMCA
Reviewed by Dr Diana Samways MBBS

This book contains some extremely sound information and advice for Candida sufferers and for therapists and doctors (if only the latter would read it.) This guide consists of three sections, the largest being the description, diagnosis and treatment of candidiasis (correctly called gut dysbiosis, as some ‘Candida is really caused by other organisms,) and two appendices which include a directory of therapists and a list of suitable books and contacts including Candida support groups, current at the time of writing in 1995. Updated information regarding all aspects of Candida treatment and contacts are available at www.candida-uk.com.

The author trained as a McTimoney chiropractor as a result of receiving successful treatment for a back problem, and opened a multidisciplinary treatment clinic, where the symptoms of candidiasis were noticed to be common and responsive to a holistic approach.

The main section of the book explains Candida, “the silent epidemic of the nineties,” how we get the overgrowth problem, symptoms, allergy, intolerances and leaky gut and the relationship of the whole syndrome with food addiction, cravings and stress.

The author discusses diagnosis and provides a symptom list questionnaire which could be used over time to assess progress. She writes well on the different philosophy of medicine required to really understand the multifactorial nature of this disease and of much chronic ill health that is so sorely mistreated by western medicine. The healing crisis (Herxheimer die-off reaction) is another subject quite alien to conventionally trained doctors; it is important to understand the value of this.

The standard nutritional approach to treatment is described, together with a general dietary cleaning up (what a friend of mine aptly calls “nutritional sobriety”); also probiotics, herbal and natural anti-candida products and nutritional supplements, all of which are vital in view of the impoverishment of our food by agribusiness. There is a good section on which foods to avoid and their possible replacements, recipes and menu ideas, and taking one’s own food to work. I am glad to see that the author includes a food combining approach, as I have always believed this removes much of the ‘total load’, and discourages the gut fermentation of food which is responsible for many of the symptoms. Antifungal drugs are rightly mentioned as only having a very small part to play.

Appendix two contains a list of resources and of Candida support groups with contact addresses (but see below). Jane stresses the importance of joining such a support group and “breaking the low self esteem cycle” with which I heartily agree, as I suspect that adults with unresolved child abuse issues may suffer a form of stress which causes release of chemicals which encourage Candida growth. The final chapters cover help for the relapers and people making incomplete recoveries; research and complementary therapies.

My major criticism is the omission of any mention of reducing the mould count in the air we breathe. The best anti-candida diet in the world will fail if the person lives in a mouldy house and inhales airborne moulds (candida is a mould that feeds on other moulds). It is important to reduce the mould count in houses, schools etc. and especially in the bedroom of the sufferer.

The book was written in 1995 and partly revised in 1997 which dates all the information, especially that in the directory of therapists. The website www.candida-uk.com is a source of recent information.

There is no subject index, but a very good list of “what practitioners’ (qualification) letters stand for”. The contents list at the beginning is detailed and helpful. There are a number of editing and typographic errors which could be put right in an updated edition. However, in spite of this, it is an excellent basic text and very readable.

About the Reviewer
Dr Diana Samways qualified in Medicine from the Royal Free Hospital and worked in General Practice. She now runs a holistic medical practice in Haslemere Surrey with a particular interest in IBS, Candida, allergies, including moulds; depression, anxiety and the connection between allergy and addiction. Dr Samways is an entertaining public speaker on holistic health topics. Her popular book: I’m a Patient... Get me out of Here... is available on Tel: 01428 643021; www.allergydoctor.org.uk

Further Information
This title is available for £8.99 plus £2.01p&p from Bailey Book-keeping Services, 93 Ram Gorse Harlow Essex. CM20 1PZ. Tel: 01621 810323; www.candida-uk.com