

Reviews

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Monique Raats, Lisette de Groot and Wija van Staveren (eds), *Food for the Ageing Population*, Woodhead Publishing, Great Abington, Cambridge, 2009, 652 pp., hbk £175, ISBN 13: 978 1 84569 193 6.

In recent years there has been a steadily increasing interest in food and nutrition in old age; in the role of nutrition in ageing, health and function; and in developing functional foods and products for the age group. This book addresses all three of these areas. The editors are to be congratulated on producing the book, which contains 28 chapters written by 50 authors who are mainly from Europe, Scandinavia, the United States of America and other western countries. The book has three parts. The first focuses on ‘Understanding older people as consumers of food and beverages’, and includes social, cultural and sensory aspects of food in later life. The chapters explore the impact of ageing on food choice, sensory perception and appetite, as well as social aspects of eating. The second section covers the role of nutrition and health, and includes chapters on the impact of nutrients on various systems of the body including bones, gut and the immune system, and the role of nutrition in the prevention of disease including Alzheimer’s. The final section of the book explores issues such as food safety and food preparation, health education and designing new foods. The book therefore presents an impressive breadth of work addressing these three elements in the field of nutrition.

The book has several reviews of the evidence to date, which will be useful for teaching and learning, and as each chapter stands in its own right it works well as a reference book. Each of the chapters presents a concise and in-depth review of the area and draws together the current state of knowledge, with many also identifying areas for future study. A range of disciplinary approaches are included, from ethnography and sociology (Fjellstrom), physiology (Nordin), biochemistry (e.g. Tucker), body composition (Deurenberg-Yap), diagnosis and treatment of undernutrition (Morley), food safety (Gettings) and health promotion (Sayhoun and Anderson), to mention but a few. This broad range highlights the breadth of disciplinary approaches necessary for the current study and understanding of food and nutrition.

It is a disappointment that the editors have not provided a final synthesis chapter, for the book ends rather abruptly with the final review. Combined with the short introduction, much of which is taken up by tables, this leaves the chapters free-standing with little indication of how the editors made their selection of content or how the collection might cohere. In their introduction, the editors state that the book is focused on the ‘prevention of, rather than treatment of, disease and age-related pathologies’ (p. xxviii). The third section of the book is the shortest with only five chapters, only one of which explores nutrition education, and no chapter specifically presents an analysis of current policy regarding

prevention for the older age group. It would have been useful for the reader if the editors had addressed issues such as the clear disciplinary boundaries evident in the various chapters' contents. What would be added to the field if research were undertaken which crossed these boundaries? A final chapter which drew together this work and explored where these diverse approaches leave us would have been a challenging but interesting exercise.

Perhaps surprisingly, although there is a chapter on feeding assistance in care homes there is no exploration of the prevention of poor nutrition in the hospital setting, a topic that attracts a great deal of media interest. Furthermore, the book addresses only issues in developed western countries. Despite these limitations, the book should be highly recommended as a resource for a wide range of audiences with an interest in nutrition: from academics, researchers, practitioners and students in the fields of biomedicine, nutrition, dietetics and food science, as well as social science, to those working in the food industry. The price of the volume will probably deter its use as a personal textbook for students, but rather places it as a reference book. Wherever nutrition is researched, taught and studied, this book should be in the library.

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Katherine Froggatt, Sue Davies and Julienne Meyer (eds), *Understanding Care Homes: A Research and Development Perspective*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2008, 264 pp., pbk £19.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 84310 553 4.

This overview of life in United Kingdom (UK) care homes is edited by the three conveners of the National Care Home Research and Development Forum who were commissioned by the charity Help the Aged to prepare a review of the literature as well as an accessible report about the quality of life in care homes. The resulting report, *My Home Life*, which at the time received considerable attention from the national press, constituted a comprehensive description of life in a UK care home, from the resident's admission through to, in most cases, death.

The book reviewed here presents some of the research upon which *My Home Life* was partly based, and although it is targeted at a wide audience including policy makers, several chapters focus on practice issues particular to nurses and social workers. It commences with a scene-setting chapter in which the editors explain the fundamental premise of the book: 'an emphasis on participatory engagement and collaborative working, both within care homes and between care homes and external agencies' (p. 18). The editors identify four primary principles of these relationships: equity, engagement, mutual learning, and honesty, and they suggest that the research and development examples in the book show how these principles can be incorporated into practice to enhance the experiences of all the players in care home life.