

Book Review

G. Geissler and H. Powers (editors). *Human Nutrition* 11th ed. Amsterdam: Elsevier 2005. £52.95, pp. 743. ISBN: 044307356 2.

This book is the latest edition of the classic text *Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, previously edited by Garrow, James and Ralph. The book states that it is an authoritative and comprehensive textbook on nutrition for all those working in nutrition and other health sciences, including undergraduate and post-graduate students. According to the preface, the dietetics component of previous editions has been omitted (due to a growing science base), leaving the text to concentrate on the principles and context of human nutrition.

The new edition is quite a change from the tenth edition. As well as new editors and contributors, it is physically smaller, contains fewer pages, and is now divided into six parts. These are as follows (with chapters in brackets): Food and Nutrients (Food and nutrient patterns; Food and nutrient structure), Body Composition and Macronutrient Metabolism (The physiology of nutrient digestion and absorption; Body size and composition; Energy balance and body weight regulation; Carbohydrate metabolism; Fat metabolism; Protein metabolism and requirements; Alcohol metabolism; Implications for nutrition and health), Micronutrient Function (Water-soluble vitamins; Fat-soluble vitamins; Minerals and trace elements; Inter micronutrient topics), Dietary Requirements for Specific Groups (Infancy, childhood and adolescence; Pre-pregnancy, pregnancy and lactation; Aging and older people; Vegetarian diets; Dietary considerations for sport and exercise), Clinical Nutrition (Cardiovascular disease; Obesity; Diabetes mellitus; Cancers; Diseases of the gastrointestinal tract; Nutrition and the skeleton; Dental disease; Immune function, food allergies and food intolerances; Eating disorders; Deficiency diseases; Diet and genotype interactions), Public Health Nutrition (The science of epidemiology; Nutritional assessment methods; Food supply, factors affecting production, trade, access; Food and nutritional policies and interventions).

The new format includes a CD-ROM, which contains more information (text, tables, figures, references and hotlinks to

other websites), thus allowing topics to be explored in greater detail while limiting the physical size of the book. The book also states that it addresses recent developments in human nutrition, notably gene–nutrient interactions.

While reviewing the book, I compared some of the chapters with similar chapters in other text books. I found the chapters to be direct and concise, with key points listed at the end of sections. There is a sign that directs readers to the CD-ROM at various points throughout the text, and when viewed on a computer the CD-ROM does indeed provide additional text which can be easily searched, plus tables and figures in both JPEG and PDF format.

This approach in the new edition has pros and cons. On the positive side, it allows the book to be physical smaller and more concise than the obviously larger tenth edition, and also gives the reader the possibility to print out extra text, tables and figures for revision, or for incorporation into presentations or handouts (permission pertaining). On the negative side, it does tend to make the book rather text heavy and at times cramped, with little ‘white space’ and few diagrams or tables incorporated in the pages to break up or complement the text. This may therefore make the book hard work for the average first- or second-year undergraduate who is learning *de novo*. As a minor point, I also noticed there is no longer a ‘Historical perspective’ chapter at the beginning, something I would have thought useful to a student.

Having said that, compared with similar textbooks it certainly stands up as a comprehensive and authoritative text, and does not appear to be lacking in any aspect of general Human Nutrition. In summary then, I would say the book is an excellent and up to date reference book on Human Nutrition (and certainly worth the money at just over £30 if you shop around online).

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