



*The following reviews include those of the 2 books that received Honorable Mention awards from AMWA in its annual Medical Book Awards competition.*

### Honorable Mention, Trade Category

#### ***American Medical Association Complete Medical Encyclopedia***

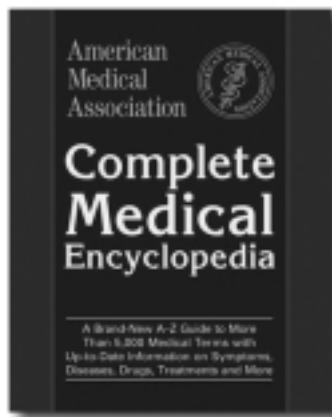
Jerrold B. Leikin, MD, and Martin S. Lipsky, MD, editors  
New York, NY: Random House Reference, 2003.  
1,408 pp. \$45.00

As medical information proliferates, finding reliable sources that address a variety of subjects becomes increasingly challenging. This 1-volume reference, developed by the American Medical Association, has admirably met this challenge.

The heart of the book is an alphabetical listing of more than 5,000 terms encompassing health care issues affecting everyone from infants to the older population. Each term is defined in a readable style, and longer entries include subheadings to make the information more accessible. The text is broken up with sidebars and illustrated with more than 1,500 line drawings and photographs. Medical terms are defined parenthetically within the text, and small caps are used to indicate cross references to other entries. A comprehensive index aids in locating terms that are not included as entries.

In addition to the comprehensive encyclopedia, the book includes a number of other useful reference tools, beginning with a series of symptom charts. Twenty-nine common symptoms—from abdominal pain to weight loss—are presented in a series of decision trees. By answering a hierarchy of yes or no questions, the reader is provided with a likely diagnosis, given cross references to consult, or instructed to “Contact your doctor.” Life-threatening conditions are flagged with bold-faced entries: EMERGENCY! GET MEDICAL HELP NOW! or CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY.

The next 2 sections contain an atlas of the body and a brief look at 21st century medicine. In contrast to the less expensive paper and 1-color design used in the rest of the book, these 2 sections use 4-color displays and clay-finish paper to advantage. The atlas illustrates systems like the heart and circulatory system and the



digestive system in vivid detail. Similarly, the discussion of the future of medicine, which focuses on genetics, biomedical imaging, bionic people, and new surgical techniques, is beautifully illustrated.

Following the encyclopedic core of the book is a brief first aid manual. Also organized alphabetically, it highlights information on assessing each medical emergency and providing the type of immediate help that may be needed. Numerous sidebars illustrate techniques and present step-by-step instructions for offering appropriate first aid.

The book concludes with 3 short sections: a sample legal form to be used as a health care advance directive, a list of phone numbers and Web sites for organizations focused on specific health care concerns, and a fact sheet explaining the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and confidentiality of patients' health information.

For readers in search of a comprehensive health care reference at a reasonable price, this book is highly recommended. Written in a readable style and packed with information, it provides a useful overview on a vast array of topics.

— Helen E. Hodgson, PhD

*Helen E. Hodgson is a freelance biomedical editor, college professor, and director of the undergraduate and graduate communication programs at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, UT.*

## Honorable Mention, Trade Category

### ***Ovarian Cancer: Your Guide to Taking Control***

Kristine Conner and Lauren Langford

Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 2003. 576 pp. \$29.95

Imagine a shell-shocked woman who has just received a dreaded diagnosis: ovarian cancer. What does she know about the disease, except that Gilda Radner died from it? Not much. That's where this book comes in.

The first chapter, "Ten Things to Do Now," is aimed specifically at that stunned woman with the new diagnosis. The rest of the book can be read piecemeal, as needed. Remarkably, the tone is upbeat and stresses the positive. While not ignoring grim ovarian cancer statistics, the authors counsel patients to position themselves as survivors and to concentrate on the factors they can control.

Lauren Langford, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 1997, conceived, researched, and began to write *Ovarian Cancer: Your Guide to Taking Control*. Already a breast cancer survivor and activist, Langford quickly applied her research skills and networking experience to ovarian cancer, leaving behind boxes of research materials and drafts of several chapters when she passed away in 2000. Kristine Conner completed the work, maintaining Langford's personal and compassionate perspective.

This jewel of a book is packed not only with the latest facts about the disease and its treatment but also with personal experiences and, notably, useful boxed "Questions to ask your doctor" scattered throughout. There is wise counsel for dealing with the medical world, with such sections as "First, Overcome Your Awe of Your Doctor," "Partnering with Your Healthcare Team," and "Maintain Your Own Records."

### ***Ideas into Words: Mastering the Craft of Science Writing***

Elise Hancock. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. 176 pp. \$18.95 (paperback); \$42.00 (hardcover)

The best way to learn to write is to work with a ruthless editor—someone who won't hesitate to rip your prose to pieces, put it back together masterfully, and then boost your crushed spirits with a pep talk. Over and over again.

Reading Elise Hancock's book is a lot like talking with that skilled editor. Her slim paperback is full of advice on every aspect of science writing, from big questions about how to research complex topics, down to details of sentence structure.



By helping women with ovarian cancer to "take control" of their situation, this volume really lives up to its title. Aside from helping readers understand the disease process, symptoms, tests, and treatments, there are chapters on clinical trials, understanding the prognosis, and living with side effects. Gentle humor enlivens the text; a section on remission is called "Dancing with 'NED'" [no evidence of disease]. There is even a chapter on legal, employment, and insurance issues. Practical advice includes insurance coverage for clinical trials, deciding whether to keep working, and requesting medical leave for yourself and your caregivers. New research horizons and over 40 pages of resource listings round out the book. And when all else fails, a sensitively written chapter on end-of-life issues—deciding to stop treatment; physical, emotional, and practical concerns—offers helpful suggestions.

*Ovarian Cancer: Your Guide to Taking Control* is a highly recommended and valuable resource for women diagnosed with this daunting disease; for their family, friends, and colleagues; and for health care professionals and the general public.

— Devora Mitrany

*Devora Mitrany, ELS, is a medical writer and editor who works at Caremark in Scottsdale, AZ.*



The book reads like a conversation with an extrovert who jumps eagerly from idea to idea. But this jumpiness doesn't interfere with readability because Hancock uses examples and catchy subheadings to carry her reader along with her. An index full of tongue-in-cheek references will help you find anything you need later, even a discussion of the word "not" (it's on page 127, where Hancock demonstrates that "Jack

Sprat could eat no fat” is stronger than “Jack Sprat couldn’t eat any fat”).

Her first chapter starts with a description of the reader’s delicate, unconscious appraisal of the opening words of a book or article. “As I start reading, I am meeting a person, and I am deciding, in just about the millisecond it takes in real life, whether I want to talk with this guy,” she writes. In her analysis of how to hook that reader, Hancock invites writers to draw on their own experiences of reading and having conversations. Simultaneously, of course, she demonstrates how to do the job well.

Hancock sees writing as a calling, so her advice often encompasses lifestyle. For instance, Hancock urges writers to abandon the gruntish “Uh-huh” in daily life so that they won’t be tempted to use it during an interview. She also admonishes writers to stop reading trashy magazines and watching junk television for fear of contaminating their own writing style.

A minor flaw is an occasional lack of skepticism about scientists’ motives and expertise. For example, Hancock advises respect for the “Linus Pauling effect,” a tendency for famous scientists to be correct about unusual theories.

Pauling, the Nobel-winning chemist, advocated taking high-dose vitamin C to prevent colds. However, decades of subsequent research suggest that Pauling vastly overestimated the benefits of this vitamin: megadose ascorbic acid does not seem to prevent colds, although it may shorten their duration by perhaps a half-day.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Hancock should have used the Pauling story to show that scientists, like other people, are likely to make mistakes when they venture outside their own field.

Nevertheless, *Ideas into Words* is a useful and enjoyable resource. Read it to renew your enthusiasm for writing and to find new ways to think about common problems. It’s no substitute for hands-on training with an excellent mentor, but it can be an excellent supplement.

— Jessica Ancker

1. Douglas RM, Chalker EB, Treacy B. Vitamin C for preventing and treating the common cold. Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. 2, 2004.

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## WORDS OF WISDOM

### • Overwork •

In general, many freelancers do not handle overwork very well. Entrepreneurs work very hard and are very dedicated. Some, if they have an established business, will limit how much they do; they won’t pursue additional business. (They may get some additional revenue from it but they don’t get the payback on it.) But those are usually people with lots of experience and they have established their client base. If you are trying to establish a client base, it’s very hard to turn away business.

The thing is you have to listen to your body. Know you have limits. Watch for pressures that make you think of ignoring opportunities for time off. You need to be maintained just like a plant. It is hard, because there will be demands and opportunities.

*Lawrence Rhyne, Professor of Management and Advisor for the Entrepreneurship Program, San Diego State University College of Business Administration*