



***The Vitamins: Fundamental Aspects in Nutrition and Health***, 2nd ed, by Gerald F Combs Jr, 1998, 618 pages, hardcover, \$59.95. Academic Press, San Diego.

This book is an update of the first edition, which was intended primarily for use in teaching although it was also expected to be useful as a desk reference for nutritionists and health professionals. This second edition retains the general format of the first but has been modestly expanded to include more recent findings in the areas of molecular biology and clinical medicine. The most significant changes have been made in the chapters on vitamins A, D, E, and C, and folate because there have been extensive recent developments in their study. Each chapter now has a listing of subdivisions set as a brief table of contents. For each specific vitamin group, a new first subdivision addresses the significance of the vitamin. Other subsections, as before, attend to sources, absorption, transport, metabolism, excretion, metabolic functions, and the separate issues of deficiency and toxicity. In some cases, as with niacin and folate, there are sections on pharmacologic uses. Case studies and questions round out the chapters, and each has a recommended reading list.

Most of the main points about each of the classic vitamins can be found in this text. The most significant dearth of information concerns methods used in the assays of the vitamins, their catabolites—which are often useful in status determinations—and the metabolically derived coenzymes and hormonally active forms that function biochemically. Clearly, it was not the purpose of a single volume to be so all-inclusive; however, it would have been appropriate to give references for such techniques, eg, the 12 volumes on “Vitamins and Coenzymes” in the *Methods in Enzymology* series, also by Academic Press.

The author, as stated in the preface to the first edition, intended his book to be “an accurate synopsis of present understanding but not a definitive reference to the original scientific literature.” This is certainly the case, for it would be difficult to find the experimental bases from which most statements derive, much less identify the researchers who made the findings, from citations within the text. Although the footnotes may have been modestly expanded, these are mainly in the nature of comments or further explanations of points within the text rather than systematic references to research papers. Also, some of the reviews suggested as recommended reading are less useful than others if consideration is given to the investigative expertise of their authors rather than to how recent is the re-review of the subject. Overall, however, sufficient review material has been garnered to allow a diligent student to search further into the science that led to the book’s summary of what is known about this important and interesting subject of vitamins.

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## Book Reviews

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This book continues to provide very good coverage of vitamins and should accomplish the educational aims of its author.

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***Nutrition in the Community: The Art and Science of Delivering Services***, 4th ed, by AL Owen, PL Splett, and GM Owen, 1999, 654 pages, hardcover, \$69.50. WCB McGraw-Hill, New York.

This extensively revised fourth edition of a classic textbook on community and public health nutrition has much to offer to those who teach both graduates and undergraduates in the health professions. This edition adds both analytic and medical expertise to an already strong text in public health nutrition. It differs from other texts in that it is theory based, but also firmly rooted in teaching practical applications in community practice. This book deserves a place on the bookshelf of all clinical nutritionists who make presentations to community groups or who conduct research on applied topics. Those who provide nutritional care in community settings will also find many “pearls” to use in practice.

The text addresses health as a biological phenomenon that interacts with behavioral and lifestyle factors, environmental factors, and factors related to the health care system. The relations between these factors are examined. The first part of the book focuses on environmental factors influencing community nutrition practice, including both social and physical aspects of the environment and demographic and social trends that affect the delivery of community nutrition services. Various issues related to dietary guidance, food labeling, and communication of nutritional concepts to consumers are also considered. Basic principles of nutritional epidemiology are introduced and discussed with a community focus. A brief overview of the health care system and the role of nutrition services within it follow. An informative exposition of methods for measuring performance and outcomes is also given. Public policy issues with special relevance to nutrition, the interplay between government and various interest groups in forging nutrition policy, the food supply, and issues of current concern in community nutrition are discussed. This section concludes with a discussion of the effects of

these various forces on behavior and methods for bringing about behavioral changes.

Chapters in the second part of the book focus on community nutrition during the different life stages: infancy, childhood, adolescence, pregnancy, and old age. Nutrition in individuals with special developmental and health needs is also addressed. The third part of the book focuses on managerial aspects of delivering nutrition services. This section is unique and particularly strong. It begins by addressing the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs to meet community needs and concludes by discussing aspects of money management, including budgeting and grant writing. The final part of the book addresses means for achieving effective community nutrition programs and includes topics such as communications, strategies for working effectively in cross-cultural and multicultural settings, ethics, and international nutrition.

The book is a good choice for college teachers of community and public health nutrition. Each chapter has either a case study or a commentary by an expert that addresses practical applications, including a set of questions about each case, learning objectives, and core concepts. The book concludes with 7 appendices, 2 of which include definitions of commonly used terms in managed care and nutrition care. Resources and organizations involved in food and nutrition policy and in nutrition education are also provided as are selected physical signs of malnutrition and an evaluation of scientific research about diet.

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