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## *Book review*

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**Home Health Care: A Complete Guide for Patients and Their Families**, by Jo-Ann Friedman. Fawcett Columbine, 201 E 50th St, New York, NY 10022. 601 pages. \$14.95.

This book was written for patients and families who may be seeking home health services. While it is geared to the lay reader, the book is important to home health care providers because our clients are turning to works like this one for information about home health care services. The book is available in pharmacies and the self-help section of book stores. The author has had experience in rehabilitation and was at one time a patient in need of home health care herself.

The book is quite extensive and attempts to cover the field of home health care, from insurance to plans of treatment. Since the content is so broad, each subject is covered in limited depth, but the depth is sufficient

to assist families and individuals in seeking out home care services.

The first part of this volume provides a brief overview of home health care services, alternatives to institutions, and the home health care team. The caregiver role is explored, and the reader is taken through the process of selecting home health care services. The next section covers the role of insurance in home health care and the role of Medicare in financing home health care. This interesting section is simple and straightforward. Families often have many questions about insurance coverage and, while it cannot cover every question, the book provides the reader with an overall understanding of how home health care can be financed. The book also includes a chapter called "Getting your Money's Worth," in which the client is encouraged to determine his or her insurance coverage and the process for appealing a claim denial by an insurance company or Medicare is explored.

The next chapter includes practical suggestions for preparing the home and tells

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how to set up the bathroom and bedroom; it also describes self-help devices that are available. A discussion, with pictures, explains common problems faced by the patient with limited mobility. This chapter provides information that should ease the transition from the hospital to the home for both the family and the patient.

The following section, entitled "Daily Living," is an overview of home nursing care. A discussion of nutrition includes brief introductions to parenteral and enteral nutrition. The information presented is not adequate for instructing the caregiver in the techniques of parenteral or enteral nutrition but rather introduces the reader to alternative ways of providing nutrition.

Several excellent charts are included for marking the patient's progress. There are also tips for helping the patient with grooming and personal care. Although many of the tips are very simple adaptations, the lay reader will probably find the suggestions very helpful. The section on drugs and drug interactions emphasizes the importance of knowing why drugs are prescribed and how to find out if drugs may interact with each other or with food. Several references are provided for further information.

Included in the personal health care chapter is a discussion of sexuality. The author presents an overall perspective as well as a brief case study. Many patients and their families have questions about sexual functioning after illness, and this chapter allows the patient and family to know that they are not alone in these concerns.

The next section of the book covers special care topics such as pain control, pressure sores, and the dying patient. The discussions are rather brief but will give the lay reader an overall understanding of these issues. Hospice programs are introduced as well as a list of guidelines for the

caregiver of a dying patient. The section on death and dying is well written and will inform the family of what services are available and that there is an alternative to dying in the hospital.

The second half of the book discusses various health problems that might result in the need for home health care. These include old age, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, heart attack, hypertension, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Since all of these health problems are covered in 200 pages, the discussions are brief and superficial. However, they cover the major questions and concerns families will have about these conditions. The 20 or so pages devoted to arthritis discuss the different types of arthritis and joint replacement surgery, as well as some exercises and suggestions for living with the disease. A list of arthritis drugs frequently used is presented with precautions and possible side effects. Several references are cited for readers who want additional information. Many books as well as the pamphlets from the arthritis association would provide more comprehensive information on the disease and its treatment. What this book provides is an overview of the most common conditions that a family might face.

The last section is an excellent and comprehensive resource directory. The directory is organized around the health conditions presented in the second half of the book. Many associations, foundations, and voluntary organizations are identified along with a brief description of services. The address and telephone number of each are included in the summary. This directory will provide the patient or family with an additional source of information about a specific health problem.

In the section on home care services,

the National Association for Home Care, the National HomeCaring Council, and the National League for Nursing are discussed. A list of proprietary home care companies is provided, including addresses and telephone numbers. The visiting nurse associations are briefly described, and the reader is advised to consult the telephone book for the nearest association.

Several of the listed telephone numbers were dialed, and all are current. Although the accuracy of this information will diminish over time, the section would be a great help to a patient or family attempting to

obtain more information on a disease or assistance with health services or self-help groups.

Although the book has limitations, the material is generally accurate and the resource directory should be a great help to individuals attempting to obtain more information. The book, with over 600 pages, attempts to meet the needs of everyone who is using or might need home health services. While it falls short of this goal, it is readily available, easily read, and will give patients and families an overview of home health care and home health services.