

Medical Problems in Women over 70. When Normative Treatment Plans do not Apply

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When it comes to understanding the fundamental mechanistic basis of aging, biogerontological research is generally gender-neutral. However, when one tries to use that information for testing and applying potential interventional approaches, significant differences between males and females show up, and often one intervention that prolongs the lifespan of males of a species has either no effect or an opposite effect on the longevity of females. Numerous such examples can be found in biogerontological literature, specially in studies performed on fruit flies, rodents and other experimental model systems. That similar differences could exist in human beings is never doubted, yet there is no systematic analysis of men-women differences with respect to aging, age-related diseases and other socio-medical issues. This book attempts to fill that gap by giving an overview of the social, psychological and clinical problems in elderly women over the age of seventy years. One of the reasons for selecting age 70 years for this analysis is that that is when the differences in male-female ratio in the population become significant and apparent increasing from 1:1 until about age 50 to 1:2 at age 70, and reaching almost 1:4 at the age of 100 years.

This book contains 16 well-written review articles arranged in five sections titled: epidemiology and scope of the problem, conditions affecting elderly women, management problems, common gynaecological problems, and promoting healthy living. More than half of the contributors are from the UK, and the rest are from the USA, Australia, France, Norway and Ireland; and they generally represent geriatricians and public health specialists. The range of topics covered in these articles is wide and includes demographic changes, temperature sensitivity of the elderly, osteoporotic fractures, cardiovascular problems, gynaecological cancers, depression, dementia, and mainstream and complementary and alternative medicine. Although some of the chapters are specific to women's issues, most other chapters generally do not make any gender-distinction while citing data from experimental and clinical studies. Was that not the original aim of the book? Most of the chapters do not succeed in doing that. At best, this book is able to draw our attention to the observations that there are differences in the sensitivity of men and women to shifts in temperature, to the extent of heart of disease and stroke, and to the extent of dementia and depression etc. However, when it comes to discussing the mechanistic explanations for these differences in men and women, almost nothing is discussed—perhaps there are no real data for doing that.

The main success of this book lies in its ability to initiate discussion and to show some ways of how to handle these issues in geriatric and biogerontological

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research. Understanding the biochemical and molecular basis of male–female differences in terms of stress response, nutritional uptake and utilisation, drug pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics,

immune surveillance against cancers and other issues is extremely important for developing effective and appropriate measures for prevention and treatment of age-related diseases.