

Resource review

Stacey E. **Hot topics in general practice.**
4th ed. Oxford: Bios Scientific Publishers, 2002

The aim of *Hot topics in general practice* is to provide brief summaries of relevant articles for primary care clinicians to help them keep up to date with developments relevant to their field. Stacey states in the preface that she does not attempt to critically appraise the studies. The target audience includes general practitioners, general practice trainees, medical students, and those studying for general practice examination.

This resource was compiled by selecting “hot topics” from 1999 on from 4 major journals: the *BMJ*, *British Journal of General Practice*, *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, and *Evidence-Based Medicine*. The author provides background information on each topic, although there is no description of how this information is derived. The book does not present explicit criteria for the selection or evaluation of the content; however, the information describing each article follows a systematic approach that is consistent throughout the book. Articles selected from *Evidence-Based Medicine* have already been screened for quality standards, but the quality of articles from the other selected journals is unclear.

Topics cover a range of target disorders including diabetes, obesity, asthma, women’s health, and prostate disease. Each topic begins with a summary box that contains key points from the articles that were reviewed. Each article reviewed is presented using the same format including the purpose, design, and results of the study. Large topics are subdivided so that specific material can be quickly targeted. For example, the section on hormone replacement is divided into fractures, breast cancer, coronary artery disease, and others.

With the purchase of the book, the reader receives a 6 month free subscription to the online version of the resource (www.hot-topics.co.uk). The website provides access to summaries of articles from the most recent issues of the same 4 journals, and several new topics not covered in the book including clinical audits and the use of cannabis. The updating schedule is not provided. The reader has an option to receive e-mail alerts when new information is available on topics specified by the reader. The website presents information in the same format as the book. It is easy to navigate, allowing the user to browse by hot topic, use the index, or type in search terms. New MRCCGP (Member Royal College of General Practice) exam summaries are also available and are useful to the family medicine or general practice trainee.

Hot topics in general practice is not comprehensive, only presenting selected topics in general practice, and the material is not explicitly appraised for quality. The topics that are included, however, provide clinically useful information and the information is presented in an easily accessible manner. The background section is helpful and briefly provides information on older studies that help in interpreting more recent information. The summaries are short, and the consistent presentation of the conclusions allows for quick scanning. I would use this resource as a starting point in clinical practice, but also note that there may be considerable overlap with *Evidence-Based Medicine*.

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Hot topics in general practice can be purchased online at www.bios.co.uk for £29.99. The list of contents can also be viewed at this site. A website featuring content from the book is available at www.hot-topics.co.uk.

Ratings:

Methods/Quality of information: ★★☆☆☆

Clinical usefulness: ★★☆☆☆