The textbook *Optimizing exercise and physical activity in older people* edited by Meg Morris and Adrian Schoo will prove to be a useful addition to the reference libraries of health professionals who use exercise in their day to day practice.

Although there is no real division of the book into topical areas, the Editors have ensured there is a logical progression from the provision of a convincing argument, using recent statistics from population studies, that physical activity of any kind is effective in preventing or delaying acquired pathology and disability, through to methods of providing exercise followed by exercise as a treatment intervention.

The authors of the preliminary chapters bring an extensive volume of evidence to support the promotion of increased physical activity for all people as they age, so that most pathological conditions associated with ageing can be averted. Subtly throughout the early chapters the reader is encouraged to think of the influences generation and culture impose on men and women. These aspects were considered in regard to how they would affect the way each individual approaches the stages that have been identified in the lead up to self-initiation of physical activity over and above the usual household, work, or leisure activities. The reader is encouraged, though not overtly, to consider this aspect when promoting a healthy lifestyle and making the exercise they are promoting attractive to an individual. These aspects are important as, ultimately, exercise in venues other than the clinical situation are self-initiated and in most cases self-directed. They are adopted independently by informed adults. The older generation has been identified in the book as being more likely to take up extra physical activity on advice from a doctor rather than independently as a reactive management of an already present pathology. Very rarely will the older generation be proactive regarding health.

Irrespective of how individuals come to increase their physical activity, a vital factor is that they and all health professionals have correct and up to date information so that an informed choice might be made for or by the individual. To this end, some of the middle chapters of the book might have introduced more reasoned argument in addition to the considerable evidence-based support provided regarding the effect of exercise, so that readers could consider the up-take of progressive resisted exercise for example with due consideration of the potential harms as well as good. There was little indication that the majority of research was undertaken on healthy men and women but still resulted in musculoskeletal injuries. Some authors did introduce the notion that it was import to practise progressive resisted weight lifting with ‘good form’ as a vital factor for preventing musculoskeletal injury during this type of exercise. However in reality, many individuals start a weights program without supervision because their doctor tells them to, thereby putting themselves at risk of injury. Perhaps this aspect of the book might be enhanced in future editions so that health practitioners who do not have extensive backgrounds in the physiology of ageing and the various pathologies encountered in older people might understand the need for identifying precautions that should be taken and the need for flexibility in application of a regime when recommending a weights program or other exercise approaches such as endurance, dance, tai chi, yoga or Pilates to older adults.

The authors of the final chapters utilise a considerable evidence base with which to argue the importance and effectiveness of increased physical activity for the improvement of functional ability and quality of life in the management of pathological conditions encountered in the elderly. Consideration of concomitant problems and the physiological impairments due to the existent pathology encountered in these older people has been utilised to substantiate suitable exercise choices, whether in the form of structured exercise or through activities of daily living, so that maximum translation of the effect of the exercises into daily life is achieved.

The up-to-date information regarding dual task and attention will prove extremely attractive for physiotherapists who will read the book. Together with the contents of the chapter pertaining to physical activity and falls prevention, this information should assist health care practitioners who prescribe exercise to consider the older person as a whole and to offer a more overreaching exercise program perhaps utilising the notion of cross training to gain maximum effect.

Overall, the book provides very useful information for the discerning physiotherapy student or clinician. Other allied health practitioners and exercise physiologists also should find considerable food for thought within the pages. The information should prove thought provoking rather than being considered as being unable to be improved upon. Many research questions came to mind as the text was read and this aspect might enable clinicians to embark on applied research in their areas of practice.

I would recommend this textbook as a very useful addition to the literature currently available on the topic.

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