

## Book review

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Gillick, M.R. (2020). *The caregiver's encyclopedia: A compassionate guide to caring for older adults*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 376 pp. \$54.95 (hbk), ISBN 1421433583.

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*The Caregiver's Encyclopedia: A Compassionate Guide to Caring for Older Adults* seeks to provide guidance regarding common healthcare challenges in caring for an older adult. With increasing age comes a higher risk of chronic diseases, physical disabilities, mental illnesses, and comorbid conditions (Jaul & Barron, 2017). Responsibility for at-home health management often falls on the caregiver, regardless of medical background or knowledge. Caregivers can often feel unprepared to provide such care, lacking adequate knowledge and guidance from healthcare providers (Reinhard et al., 2008). Increased preparedness can reduce burden and distress on the caregiver while ensuring that the needs of the older adult are being met.

The book provides a comprehensive overview of factors that should be considered when caring for an older adult. It is broken down into clear sections that detail everything from taking stock of the general well-being of the older adult, to seeking medical care, to caring for the individual at home or in a treatment facility. In the first section of the book, the author provides an overview of many age-related syndromes, including acronyms, to help identify potential issues, as well as some screening tools. The use of brief screening tools (Seematter-Bagnoud & Büla, 2018) and identification of common syndromes (Magnuson et al., 2019) can facilitate formal assessment and management by a physician or other care professional.

The next few sections of the book detail some considerations and potential issues that may arise when seeking medical care with different professionals and in different settings. Communicating with physicians, as well as the role of advocating on behalf of the older adult, can be difficult tasks for caregivers. Many studies have cited difficulties or breakdowns of communication making caregiving a more difficult task (Digby & Bloomer, 2014; Reinhard et al., 2008), especially during end-of-life care (Cherlin et al., 2005). Notably, the author addresses the main risks involved with hospitalization, including the strain that multiple tests and mediations can have on an elderly individual's well-being. Several chapters outline many of the considerations that must be taken into account when hospitalization is necessary. Research has long

supported the iatrogenic impacts of hospitalization on older adults (Gillick et al., 1982). However, increased efforts to identify preadmission risk factors and the development of improved in-hospital procedures have reduced this impact (Kleinpell et al., 2008). The combination of information and improved practices within hospitals can reduce the overall chances of negative consequences related to hospitalization, while also reducing related caregiver burden.

The final portion of the book details how to best provide care in community settings, such as the home and nursing homes. Several health conditions (e.g., heart disease and diabetes), as well as mental health diagnoses, are outlined in their own respective chapter with information about symptoms and how to manage them outside of a medical setting. Finally, the author outlines information related to nursing home considerations, payment for services, and general care tips.

Overall, the author presents all material clearly and concisely in a manner that is easily understood for all those who may provide care for older adults. Each chapter covers a specific topic, allowing for a user of the book to find essential information quickly. The coverage of topics is broad, yet nothing included seems as if it does not belong in a comprehensive guide to caring for older adults. The material presented is laid out in such a way that those with no prior medical knowledge can have at least a basic understanding and may be able to problem-solve issues related to caregiving in a more informed manner. However, there are a couple of notable limitations to this book. The book provides a brief overview of many complex issues that may arise while caregiving. Although it covers many of the most common issues, other aspects of care are not discussed, most notably, a lack of coverage for the social well-being of older adults. Weaker social networks have been linked to increased rates of readmission to hospitals and lengthier hospital stays (Valtorta et al., 2018). Additionally, due to the sheer number of considerations in providing care for older adults, this book serves as a brief overview and is limited in the breadth of information it can provide. However, it is an appropriate starting place to seek out additional information or begin the conversation with professionals on improving care practices.

In summary, *The Caregiver's Encyclopedia: A Compassionate Guide to Caring for Older Adults* provides a general overview of issues that are commonly experienced by those who provide care for older adults. It provides invaluable information to caregivers in a thought-provoking manner, encouraging them to consider many factors involved in the act of caregiving. Providing care can be a daunting task, but having information organized and readily available can provide the necessary confidence and background of information necessary to improve overall care quality.

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