**Book reviews**

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**References**

5. Ibid., 52.
7. Dossey, op. cit.


*Diabetes Sourcebook* is a compilation of publications produced by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its sub- and sister agencies. It is a mix of educational material, some written for the layperson and some for the practitioner, as well as statistical data that may be more useful to researchers. The *Sourcebook’s* strength is that much of the material it reproduces is very informative and understandable for the layperson without being simplistic.

However, the *Sourcebook’s* overall flaw is that most of the publications it reproduces are somewhat out of date and incomplete. For example, the 1993 edition of the annual statistical publication *Diabetes Surveillance*, which came out in the spring of 1994, is cited (p. 52). Anyone looking for the most up-to-date figures would be searching for the 1994 edition at this time. Fortunately, the footnote (p. 52) indicates where to write to obtain a copy of the report; one hopes the later edition would be available.

Some of the other documents date as far back as 1987 and 1988 (e.g., excerpts from *The National Long-Range Plan to Combat Diabetes*), others are not dated at all (e.g., several publications developed by the Michigan Diabetes Research and Training Center), and even the Spanish-language and African American educational materials cited in the appendix are largely from the 1980s. The *Sourcebook* is useful, however, to prompt the reader to keep an eye out for newer editions of the various publications and to identify which agencies to contact to find out the latest published information.

The chapter called “Diabetes Translation” includes a document titled *The National Long-Range Plan to Combat Diabetes*, which makes the important point that patients and their practitioners are not always aware of current medical advances (p. 303). This is a vital message for readers, who should realize that the *Sourcebook* itself as well as any other consumer or professional book will not be an ultimate source for finding out about new or alternative advances.

For example, the *Sourcebook* is not alone in omitting at least one important therapy: Richard S. Dillon, M.D., of Bryn Mawr Hospital in Pennsylvania, has published research results indicating that his Circulator Boot Therapy, a “new” type of compression boot, can effectively treat ulcers [1] and prevent amputation [2]. Although the *Sourcebook* addresses prevention of amputation, I found no mention of this therapy. Regarding amputation, a chapter on “Complications of Diabetes” states, “no effective medical treatment is available” (p. 372). This same chapter states, “in general, morbidity and mortality are high among diabetic patients who have amputations” (p. 381), so the information provided on amputation prevention should be more complete. Even if Dillon’s compression-boot therapy is not considered “standard,” any good consumer source book should at least inform readers of its existence so they can make informed choices.

Other major omissions are the American Diabetes Association’s (ADA) new nutrition recommendations [3] and standards of medical care [4], both issued in 1994. Publishers of the *Sourcebook* would have been wise to delay publication to include these new guidelines.

Because the book is a compilation, there is often repetition among the documents reproduced. For example, several chapters and documents explain the difference between type I and type II diabetes mellitus. Although this kind of repetition may be useful for readers who choose to read only certain chapters, it becomes redundant for readers studying the whole volume. Due to the varying types of publications compiled, chapters alternate in tone as to whether they are directed toward the layperson or practitioner, and this requires the reader to adjust modes. It would have been more useful had the editors assimilated the information, filled in some gaps, and updated certain information, rather than just reprinting it. At a minimum, the indexing could be more useful. Most subject entries listed in the index do not contain any breakdowns. For example, under “complications,” there are approximately 125 page numbers listed with no indication of which complication is addressed. One particularly useless entry is “diabetes mellitus” with approximately 105 page numbers and no breakdowns.

There is another book also en-
The Diabetes Sourcebook, by Diana and Richard Guthrie, certified diabetes educators, published in 1992 (although it is not clear if this is a wholly new revision of a 1990 edition) [5]. In addition, The Joslin Guide to Diabetes, published in 1995, deserves mention [6]. These two volumes provide a comprehensive overview similar to Bellenir's Sourcebook, but, because they are not compilations, they are not disjointed or repetitious, and the tone is consistently geared toward the layperson.

The three books vary in the amount of information that they contain on certain topics. For example, Bellenir's Sourcebook contains much more information than the other book on gestational diabetes, The Joslin Guide and the Guthries' book have more information on exercise, The Joslin Guide contains the least information on pancreatic transplant research, and The Joslin Guide and the Guthries' book do not contain the statistical data and specific information pertaining to various ethnic groups that is available in Bellenir's Sourcebook.

Because of its more recent publication date, The Joslin Guide refers to the new ADA nutrition guidelines, which are lacking in the other two volumes. Like Bellenir's Sourcebook, The Joslin Guide and Guthries' Sourcebook do not inform readers of alternative therapies such as the Circulator Boot for preventing amputation. All three books seem to consider prevention of diabetes to be out of scope, and do not have prevention as an index entry, even for preventing complications. Overall, The Joslin Guide and Guthries' Sourcebook have index entries with more useful breakdowns than Bellenir's Sourcebook.

Another point worth mentioning is that in the case of The Joslin Guide and Guthries' Sourcebook, the reader is aware of the authors' credentials. The reader does not know, however, what qualifications Bellenir or Dresser may have.

Bellenir's Sourcebook is convenient for having the NIH and statistical information compiled in one source, cautioning that the data may not be the most up to date. It provides a comprehensive overview for laypersons who want a general understanding of the disease or who want to focus on various aspects of the disease, again cautioning that it omits certain important information. I would hope a newer edition would compile and cite more recent resources, including the new ADA guidelines; would include a broader spectrum of research studies; and would place a greater emphasis on preventive care.

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References


AIDS Sourcebook is a compendium of government documents produced in the early to mid-1990s on a myriad of AIDS-related topics. Most of the seventy-six chapters are short (fewer than ten pages), and the emphasis is on practical information for people living with AIDS and for their caregivers.

Made up of seven main parts, the book begins with a segment on historical and statistical topics. It is much heavier on the statistical side, documenting how the disease is affecting adolescents, health care workers, and U.S. residents of many races. Part 2 includes several reports from the National Commission on AIDS, covering the nation's response to the epidemic and the government's response in particular.

Medical information geared toward AIDS patients is the topic of the third section, and a good share of its nineteen chapters covers common secondary infections, such as tuberculosis and Kaposi's sarcoma. Others focus on the basics of how the immune system works and the pros and cons of becoming involved in clinical trials. Part 4 covers strategies for coping with the related social, legal, and psychological challenges of the disease, both for the patients and caregivers. These practical chapters address such areas as health insurance, social security, and defensive eating.

AIDS prevention is covered in part 5, and AIDS research is the topic of part 6. The last section is entitled "Additional Resources" and mainly gives guidance in locating additional information on AIDS-related subjects.

One strength of this book is its practical emphasis. With few exceptions, the intended audience for