

by Kathleen Head, ND

## Case Studies in Natural Medicine

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Again Dr. Werbach presents us with a valuable clinical tool, his eighth book on clinical nutrition/botanicals. In *Case Studies in Natural Medicine* Werbach has collected case reports on dietary, nutrient, or botanical interventions for specific ailments. The book is organized alphabetically by condition, making it easy for on-the-run practitioners to find the condition quickly when working up a difficult case.

The introduction begins: "Nowadays, case reports get very little respect in the clinical experimental literature. With the randomized clinical trial considered the 'gold standard,' these precious little gems of clinical acumen rarely see the light of day in print – and then usually as Letters to the Editor. One reason for this bias is the belief that studying an individual is less valuable than averaging data from a group – yet both are of similar importance." Those clinicians who agree that anecdotal case reports are invaluable will find this book very useful. The author makes the comment that positive findings for unconventional methods of treatment are frequently held to higher standards (double-blind protocols); whereas, an anecdotal case report is often all that is needed for a nutrient or botanical to be proclaimed dangerous.

The cases are compiled from a wide range of sources including: Medline-published studies, the practices of clinicians such as Drs. Abram Hoffer, Leo Galland, Jonathan Wright, and Alan Gaby, and from Dr. Werbach's own clinical experiences. The book is also available on floppy disk as a text file. This allows key word searches, making it easier to find possibly obscure entries that may be listed under other than the primary condition.

By sharing case reports, rather than relying entirely on conditions that have been extensively studied, the clinician is treated to clinical pearls for more obscure conditions. For example, among the conditions covered in this book are: acne rosacea, aggressive behavior, alopecia, aluminum toxicity, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), body odor, Buerger's disease, dumping syndrome, follicular keratosis, granuloma annulare, Huntington's disease, idiopathic thrombocytopenia purpura, interstitial cystitis, kidney failure, leukemia, mastocytosis, muscular dystrophy, Osgood-Slatter disease, spinocerebellar syndrome, tic douloureux, and upper motor neuron disease. The book covers the more common conditions as well – a total of 155 illnesses or conditions from 668 case reports.

For the nutrition-oriented clinician the book provides a handy, quick reference guide for some difficult-to-treat conditions. For serious researchers, the anecdotal case reports may inspire them to conduct further scientific inquiry.