

Review by Hazel A. Philp, ND, LAc

Menopause – Bridging the Gap Between Natural and Conventional Medicine

*Lorilee Schoenbeck, ND, with Cheryl A. Gibson, MD,
and M. Brooke Barss, MD*

*Kensington Publishing Corp.; 850 Third Avenue; New York, NY 10022
www.kensingtonbooks.com ISBN 1-57566-815-7; Softcover; 332 pages*

As the topic of menopause and books written on it have become increasingly popular, one might maintain that another book is far from necessary or beneficial. With that said, *Menopause – Bridging the Gap Between Natural and Conventional Medicine*, a collaborative effort between three healthcare practitioners – a naturopath, a medical doctor, and a psychiatrist – is a welcome addition, as it provides a vehicle for answering the vast majority of questions a woman in her menopausal years is most likely to pose.

There are 12 chapters, a resource appendix, and an extensive reference list consisting of numerous peer-reviewed journals and writings by experts in the fields of both conventional and complementary and alternative medicine. The information is up-to-date and has dispensed with the divisive language that often accompanies authors writing from one camp. Instead, the book offers a balanced perspective on the options available to women who may need individualized treatment guidelines and plans when facing the myriad decisions that can present themselves during this life stage. Diagrams and figures simplify the concepts being discussed, while worksheets help the reader assess her symptoms, risk factors, and overall health status. Case histories bring to life the issues being described, and there is a welcome balance presented among the physiological, psycho-spiritual, and social aspects of menopause.

In light of the new information revealed by the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) discontinuation of the combined estrogen and progestin (Prempro) arm of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study, this book couldn't be timelier. It was published prior to the negative findings of the NIH study, but the issue of the benefits versus risks of conventional hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is not a new discussion, and the authors present the options, including natural alternatives, concisely and succinctly. The book has an ability to take a complicated topic and break it down into simpler components so the reader needn't feel overwhelmed nor disempowered by the information. In fact, this book is about empowering the reader to understand the issues, her body, her options, and to make decisions with the help of her healthcare provider based on all of these elements.

There are some errors in the diagrams regarding the natural HRTs bi-est and tri-est, but the correct information is provided in the text.

By bridging the gap between natural and conventional medicine, the authors have indeed created a continuum of healthcare options that supports a comprehensive approach to good health and well being during menopause.