

## Book reviews

*The Glucose Revolution*. Anthony Leeds, Jennie Brand Miller, Kaye Foster-Powell and Stephen Colagiuri. Hodder & Stoughton (Australia) Pty Ltd. 1998. Paperback, pp. 230. £9.99. ISBN 0 340 76826 6

This book adds to the growing body of literature on the role of carbohydrate in human health. It has long been recognised that carbohydrates are absorbed at different rates. Since the 1980s the potential benefits to human health of carbohydrates that are absorbed slowly, those with a low glycaemic index, has gained recognition. *The Glucose Revolution* explains the glycaemic index of foods and provides clear guidelines and suggestions on how to incorporate low-glycaemic-index carbohydrate into our diets.

This book immediately grabs the reader's attention. The immediate interest stems from the fact that there is something in this book for virtually every reader. *The Glucose Revolution* brings a clear and positive message that the consumption of slowly digested carbohydrate can achieve better control of blood glucose levels. Following a brief introduction the book is divided into three sections. The blend of text, which includes discussion of research studies and short case-studies, together with aide memoires and clear diagrams to highlight pertinent points work well and serves to make this a very readable text.

The first section, 'What you need to know about the G.I. factor', provides the scientific and highly readable explanation of what comprises a healthy, balanced diet. Chapters 1–3 consider the meaning of a balanced diet, the role of carbohydrate, the concept of glycaemic index (the G.I. factor) and the value of high-carbohydrate and low-fat diets for everyone. In essence, carbohydrates with a high glycaemic index, such as bread and potatoes, are quickly digested and released into the bloodstream as glucose, providing an immediate energy boost, whereas carbohydrates with a low glycaemic index, such as rolled oats and pasta, slowly release glucose into the bloodstream, are more satisfying, and help to control hunger better. In chapter 4, 'The G.I. factor and you: your questions answered', questions arising within the introductory chapters are dealt with and the authors' advice at the outset: 'don't be tempted to skip the early chapters' are justified. Following on from these general introductory chapters, chapters 5–9 cover the potential of the G.I. factor for reducing weight, for improving sports performance, for controlling blood sugar levels and possibly for reducing the risk of heart disease. It is within these chapters that the central message about glycaemic index brings home the importance of considering glycaemic index as a means of benefiting health and sporting performance.

In section two, 'Your guide to low G.I. eating', the authors provide the reader with the know-how to plan and prepare for low G.I. meals. Within chapters 10 and 11 there

are numerous practical pointers on planning and cooking low G.I. meals and chapter 12 contains a good selection of easy-to-prepare recipes for meals and snacks and imaginative ideas for including low glycaemic index foods into the diet.

The final section, 'The G.I. factor table', is the resource section to the book. Here the authors provide a comprehensive list of the glycaemic index, fat and carbohydrate content of specific amounts of known foods and sources of further reading. However, it is not possible to interpret the quoted glycaemic index for cited foods given that the origin of the data, number of studies involved etc. is not given. Indeed, in putting together the glycaemic index values for these foods I was not entirely convinced by the authors' assumption that were: 'Australian data [on the glycaemic index of a particular food] are different from the rest of the world...Australian data rather than the average [are shown]'

Overall, this is a general interest text which will appeal to a wide audience, both healthy individuals and those with diabetes, obesity and/or at risk of heart disease. Personally, I found it frustrating that research studies discussed throughout the text were not directly cited. However, for the interested reader references to these research studies appear to be given within the 'Sources of other reading' in section three.

The majority of people in the community are totally confused by the mixed messages being widely promoted about the importance of good nutrition, not just in relation to health but in the arena of chronic illness. Given that the number of diet and healthy-eating books published appear to match current high levels of obesity, diabetes and heart disease in our society, it is a relief to come across a text which gives a clear, positive and scientifically sound dimension to the healthy eating message. This book is a good practical guide for both professionals, patients and the general public. As with all healthy-eating messages, putting theory into practice remains the dilemma but I came away from this book feeling positive and with a host of ideas about how I might include low glycaemic foods in my diet.

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*Egg Nutrition and Biotechnology*. J. S. Sim, S. Nakai and W. Guenter. Wallingford: CABI Publishing. £75. ISBN 0 85199 330 3

The original conference, and subsequent proceedings which are contained within this book, was obviously organized by scientists from the developed world. There was considerable time at the conference (and therefore space within the book) devoted to egg biotechnology. This appears to be