

REM REM: A PUBLICATION FOR RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS

MEDIA REVIEW: *Empowered Sleep Apnea: A Handbook for Patients and the People Who Care About Them*

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Empowered Sleep Apnea: A Handbook For Patients and the People Who Care About Them by Dr. David E. McCarty, MD, FAASM, and Dr. Ellen Stothard, PhD, published in 2022, is a book that focuses on empowering providers with the knowledge and resources to help patients take charge of their own health. The authors provide practical strategies for managing sleep apnea, including lifestyle modification, CPAP therapy, impact of other disorders, and troubleshooting common issues that arise. This book will be an invaluable resource for health care professionals starting their journey in sleep medicine.

Keywords: book, review, media, sleep, sleep apnea, sleep-disordered breathing, teaching, education

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Empowered Sleep Apnea: A Handbook for Patients and the People Who Care About Them by Dr. David E. McCarty, MD, FAASM, and Dr. Ellen Stothard, PhD, was published in 2022 and is a comprehensive guide that focuses on patients' perspective and their challenges to explain and manage sleep apnea and the role of other sleep disorders.

Dr. McCarty is a board-certified internal and sleep medicine specialist with over 25 years of experience. He is an advocate for patient and physician education and developed the “Five-Finger Approach” that emphasizes a patient-centered approach to sleep apnea management, which serves as a cornerstone for this book. Dr. Stothard earned her doctorate in Integrative Physiology and Neuroscience and specializes in circadian rhythm research. Her research and publications led her to develop a passion for sleep education and host a podcast on sleep apnea.

This book, available in hard copy or as an e-book, is divided into 3 sections: diagnosis, treatment, and management of complications. The first section provides an overview of obstructive and central sleep apnea (eg, causes, symptoms, pathophysiology, potential health risks, etc). Most uniquely, it discusses decision-making factors for whether treatment is needed. The second section explains and offers a step-by-step approach to treatment options, from lifestyle changes and emphasizing nasal breathing to various positive airway pressure therapies to surgery. The final section discusses complications that may arise with treatment, pathways to manage these complications, and tips for living with sleep apnea. The last section also discusses other sleep topics, including Willis-Ekbom disease, insomnia, and circadian rhythm disorders and how these conditions affect sleep apnea and overall health. While the progression of the overall sections flows naturally, the book contains 145 chapters, many as short as 1–2 pages, resulting in discontinuity at times.

Despite the title, the book is more of a manual for providers than a resource for patients. Even an educated patient without clinical training would have difficulty following it. For example, the authors define hypopnea by referencing specific American Academy of Sleep Medicine scoring rules and their respective insurance implications without any diagrams to simplify the explanation. While the authors have included unique cartoons to try and draw-in the reader, illustrations that focus on elucidating difficult concepts would have provided greater value. The book also lacks extensive facts and in-depth analysis, limiting its use for the well-informed sleep provider, or requires the reader to independently investigate important details. For instance, the chapter on sleep aids downplays the risks associated with their use based on the predominance of retrospective studies without commenting on specifics or analysis and ignores newer prospective population-based studies.

Where the book does shine is in providing a detailed holistic path to sleep apnea management, in a way that's rarely covered in medical school or residency. The authors unconventionally also eschewed traditional textbook prose, choosing to use the time-honored method of loci technique, enhancing the material's memorability, but which may also be distracting for some readers. The authors highlight real-world medical scenarios, such as the impact of high altitude on testing and treatment, and their “Five-Finger Approach” emphasizes the patients' perspective in clinical decision making that creates a pragmatic patient-centered foundation for practitioners starting their journey in sleep medicine. The “Five-Finger” system is where each digit of the hand represents a point to remember within a given topic and ensures common secondary causes of sleep complaints are not overlooked. As an example, the authors' “Five reasons to treat” encourages readers to look beyond the apnea-hypopnea index number as the primary reason to treat but to also include

patient symptoms, comorbidities, and risk and whether treatment is in alignment with such goals.

Overall, *Empowered Sleep Apnea* is an excellent resource for the novice clinician and other sleep medicine acolytes. What sets the book apart from its contemporaries are the overall easy-to-read writing style, the emphasis on a patient-centered approach, and the novel scheme to managing challenges in a systematic method. This book is recommended for providers interested in expanding their knowledge to help their patients navigate sleep apnea and make them feel more empowered and involved in their overall health.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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