

Beyond Pain: Making the Mind – Body Connection
By Angela Mailis-Gagnon and David Israelson
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The style in which this book was written suggests it was intended for the “lay” reader. However, when it comes to complicated, chronic pain conditions – the focus of Dr. Mailis-Gagnon’s ground-breaking clinical/research career – most health care providers could be validly considered to be among the lay public. A personal, engrossing book, *Beyond Pain* succeeds in explaining complex concepts of neurophysiology, pathophysiology and pharmacology of pain syndromes without sacrificing readability. The authors avoid jargon and use diagrams (e.g., of pain pathways and actual pain drawings) to ensure that the necessary discussions supplement the fascinating illustrative cases presented from Dr. Mailis-Gagnon’s clinical experience, rather than competing with the narrative.

Dr. Mailis-Gagnon is not a pioneer only because she is one of the first “pain specialists.” She is a longtime proponent of viewing her patients’ illnesses according to what is currently called the biopsychosocial model, and of the logical corollary of employing a multidisciplinary team approach in caring for them. The chapter describing her frustration and travails in trying to establish a proper

pain clinic at Toronto Western Hospital in the face of the politics of medicine will strike a sympathetic chord among most readers!

Whether discussing cases of neuropathic pain syndromes such as herpes zoster, fibromyalgia, or factitious disorders, among many others, the authors highlight the critical, often elusive mind – body connection. With appropriate pride and humility, Dr. Mailis-Gagnon guides the reader along her diagnostic odysseys, allowing her/him to vicariously feel “the thrill of victory ... the agony of defeat” with her honest accounting of clinical successes and failures. There are many lessons – about pain, about life – to be learned along the way.

You won’t use this well written, thought provoking book as a desktop reference to clinch the diagnosis of neuropathic pain in a patient. (Though the chapters are referenced, all the citations are at the back of the book, organized by chapter. I would prefer them to be listed at the end of each chapter.) Rather, clinicians should (re-)read it to remember the level of duty and caring we owe **especially** to our chronic pain patients. Students should read it to learn what they should aspire to. Patients should read it to learn that they can still hope to live even when affected by the most daunting afflictions.

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