

## Vantage point



## What is the secret of a long, healthy life?

ACCORDING TO the Book of Genesis, Abraham lived for 175 years with perfect cognitive performance; and his father, Terah, died at the age of 205. What was the secret of their longevity? Why do we, contemporary humans, not live for so long? Is it feasible nowadays to be healthy, have fun and live a long life?

In several places around the world, people live relatively long lives, almost entirely free of dementia and chronic diseases due to lifestyle and culture. Such healthy centenarians often advise us to be careful and selective with food and to avoid consuming too many calories. In other words, they call us to eat a balanced diet for health and prosperity.

The human body can be compared with a well designed and organised machine in that it runs on food from which it produces energy to keep it going.

If 'we are what we eat', why do we keep eating processed products and consuming 'plastic food' that contains additives and synthetic hormones or vegetables grown out of traditional season? Is the adage 'garbage in, garbage out' true?

What is the best available evidence on nutrition and healthy ageing, today, when every decision is, or should be, evidence based?

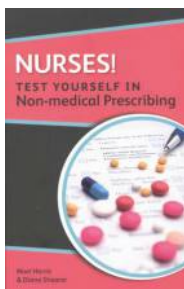
The rapidly increasing 'grey' population with cognitive impairment problems is a public health issue that is threatening future generations, although growing evidence shows that poor nutrition plays a fundamental role in cognitive decline and dementia in older people.

Living a healthy lifestyle is an investment for current and later life. Experiments show that modifying nutritional habits and lifestyles helps us to have better, longer and healthier lives; healthy minds live in healthy bodies.

For 'longevity hotspots' around the world, go to [tinyurl.com/oghepa4](http://tinyurl.com/oghepa4)

See also art & science, pages 27-34

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**Nurses! Test Yourself in Non-medical Prescribing**  
Noel Harris and  
Diane Shearer  
Open University Press  
240pp | £15.99  
ISBN: 9780335244997

THIS USEFUL book covers all facets of the non-medical prescribing curriculum.

Topics include consultation skills, clinical decision making, pharmacology, drug calculations, legal and ethical issues, safe prescribing, adverse events and concordance.

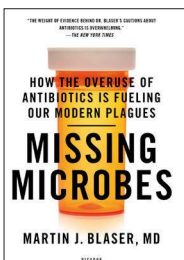
The mathematical section is particularly useful with calculations building in complexity as the questions progress.

The self-testing format of the text includes explanations of the answers, which allows the reader to cover gaps in their knowledge.

It would be suitable for any healthcare practitioner pursuing a non-medical prescribing qualification. It could also help nurses seeking to ensure their prescribing qualifications are current.

I would recommend it to all nurses who want to enhance their knowledge and awareness of medication, whether or not they are planning to undertake a prescribing qualification.

*Karin Cannons is a nurse consultant in pain management at Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust*



**Missing Microbes: How the Overuse of Antibiotics is Fueling our Modern Plagues**  
Martin Blaser  
Picador  
288pp | £8.74  
ISBN: 9780805098105

THE AUTHOR presents the case for how an over-reliance on medical treatments is leading to what he sees as the next global plague. Using science to support his theories,

he links the rise in conditions such as asthma, allergies and ulcerative colitis to evolutionary factors. Blaser believes climate change and global travel have severe health consequences.

On one side microbes are seen as agents for good health, on the other they are the perpetrators of illness. Will the overuse of antibiotics and the decline of vital bacteria be the downfall of the human race? And do staff in a modern health service need to respond?

*Valerie McGurk is a practice development nurse in paediatrics at Northampton General Hospital*



**Patient & Person: Interpersonal Skills in Nursing**  
Fifth edition  
Jane Stein-Parbury  
Churchill Livingstone/  
Elsevier Australia  
331pp | £58.99  
ISBN: 9780729541589

THE FIFTH edition of this Australian textbook provides an overview of the main issues for nurses wanting to optimise their interpersonal communications with patients.

The first part introduces interpersonal skills and the nurse-patient relationship, with the role of the nurse as a therapeutic agent set in the context of different cultural norms.

The second part devotes a chapter to each of the communication skills: listening, understanding, exploring, comforting, supporting and enabling. Each chapter has a reference list, with relevant research papers covered in detail via text boxes.

The final part examines these skills in the context of the clinical environment. This section is valuable in recognising how nursing is a stressful occupation, and that these stresses can have a negative effect on nurse-patient interactions.

This is a valuable resource so it may be worth grouping together to buy a copy.

*John Adams is an honorary research associate in the faculty of nursing and midwifery, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland*