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Book Review

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Medical Sign Language. W. Joseph Garcia. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1983. 711 pp. \$54.50 Cloth; \$43.75 Spiral (paper).

This extensive 711 page manual covers words and terms commonly used in medical, dental, and first aid settings. It was prepared for the purpose of assisting signers and interpreters in communicating clearly in medical settings. Arranged in dictionary form, the manual presents terms in alphabetical order from "abdomen" to "zoster". Each entry contains 1) the medical term, 2) definition of the medical term, 3) a sentence which uses the term in context, 4) a description of how to make the recommended sign, and 5) a line drawing of the sign. Included in the book are the names of diseases, parts of the body and their functions, physicians' instruments, medicines, drugs, and many other related terms. Large line drawings of the anatomy are included.

Although numerous attempts have been made at providing a sign base for the medical setting, no one has taken the matter as seriously as this author who sought out knowledgeable resource persons in undertaking this formidable task and the end product is considered by this reviewer to be excellent. There may be instances where expert signers would opt for other sign choices but that is true in all specialized fields and the important consideration is whether clear communication is taking place.

The signs which were selected are generally concept based and have been taken from among traditional American signs. When one sign does not adequately cover the concept, several signs are presented with drawings and explanations. Examples of entries are: Narcolepsy: 1) sleep, 2) can't, 3) control; Myopia: 1), see, 2) far, 3) blurry. A word of caution is in order to interpreters as well as to other signers. Medical vocabulary is highly specialized and it is the physician's, rather than the interpreter's, responsibility to explain a medical term which is not understood by the patient. However, background knowledge such as is offered here will certainly enrich the signer and hopefully reduce the anxiety so frequently associated with signing in the medical setting.

Medical Sign Language will be useful to interpreters who frequently function in medical settings as well as to all signers who would like to broaden their vocabulary both in medical terms and in appropriate signs to match. The manual is well done, professional in quality and appearance, meets a need, and will be a valuable addition to a serious signer's reference shelf.

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