

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE SELF-MANAGEMENT OF LOWER BACK PAIN

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AuthorHouseUK (242 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

An instructional and comprehensive back pain manual.

Exercise specialist and sports-massage therapist Tang says that he was motivated to write this debut work by his own decadeslong struggle with back discomfort. In it, he goes into some detail regarding causes and treatments of various back issues. However, although he says that the text “is not intended to be a reference or academic textbook,” it concentrates fairly heavily on technical detail, which may overwhelm some readers. For example, in Chapter 2, “Physiology of Muscle Contraction,” he describes such topics as “The Sliding Filament Theory,” quickly descending into complex terminology: “This leads to the release of Calcium (Ca+) from the sarcoplasmic reticulum—a system of membranebound tubules that surrounds muscle fibrils, releasing calcium ions during contraction and absorbing them during relaxation.” Chapter 3, “Musculoskeletal Lower Back Pain,” is no less daunting; it covers “Core Dysfunction” (“the core simply means ‘the ability of your trunk to support the effort and forces from your arms and legs during functional activities, thus allowing your muscles and joints to perform in their safest, strongest, and most effective positions’”), “Reciprocal Inhibition,” and “Synergistic Dominance”—interesting for exercise and medical professionals, but challenging for lay readers. This is not to diminish the value of all the information here, however; the book also clearly addresses important topics, such as the relationship between back pain and obesity, flat feet, and sacroiliac joint dysfunction. It also helpfully provides tips for less painful sleeping positions. The work excels at describing and illustrating—via numerous black-and-white photographs—simple and advanced back exercises. Each exercise includes helpful tips and encouragement, such as “You may not go very far if the pain is too intense. If so, simply slowly lower down and rest for a moment and then press up again.” When discussing obesity, the author offers solid information about metabolism and nutrition, as well as weight-loss exercises. Useful tables and illustrations. augment the text.

Back pain sufferers will likely find solace here—if they’re willing to wade through some highly technical language.