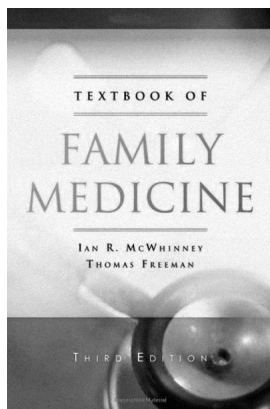


## BOOKS THAT SHAPED FAMILY MEDICINE

**Textbook of Family Medicine, Third Edition**

Ian R. McWhinney, Thomas Freeman

New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, 472 pages, \$49.50, paperback.

With his landmark text *Introduction to Family Medicine* (1981)—expanded into the *Textbook of Family Medicine* (1989) and now in its third edition (2009)—Professor Ian McWhinney, MD, laid the intellectual foundations of family medicine as a distinct discipline. Earlier texts had tried to catalogue the diagnosis and management of common problems seen in general practice. McWhinney's book dug deeper and built higher. He articulated the philosophy, concepts, and practices that distinguish family medicine from other medical specialties.<sup>1</sup> He defined the relationship-based clinical method of the patient-centered general-

ist physician. He outlined a program of inquiry to guide research.

Like the field itself, the book was holistic, meant to offer a synthetic view of patient care, professional practice, learning, and research. Early sections described principles; later chapters demonstrated their application to specific problems, patients, and practices. Also like the field of family medicine, the book has grown and evolved. Structural elements have been added on family, community, evidence-based medicine, disease prevention, and health promotion. The new third edition, coauthored by Thomas Freeman, is further updated and expanded. The text continues to combine the art of literary references and elegant style with the science of current quantitative and qualitative research.

The history of the text parallels the history of the discipline. Stone has been laid upon stone, fitted by many builders with increasingly exacting standards. The footprint has stayed remarkably true to form, and the structural integrity of the whole relies upon that early foundation.

Dr McWhinney's book was always more than a reference text for a day in the office. It was—and still is—a compass for a career in the specialty.<sup>2</sup> It still serves as a blueprint for the house of family medicine, even as we remodel it into the Patient-centered Medical Home of the future.

**William R. Phillips, MD, MPH**Department of Family Medicine  
University of Washington**REFERENCES**

1. McWhinney IR. The importance of being different. William Pickles Lecture 1996. *Br J Gen Pract* 1996;46:433-6.
2. Phillips WR. Review of McWhinney I. *Textbook of family medicine*, second edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1995. *Am Fam Physician* 1998;58(8):1910.

of other books in this series. Pamela Stone is an anthropologist whose research interests focus on maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. Chapter authors include anthropologists, physicians, nurses, midwives, sociologists, psychologists, and those in public health from universities around the world. Each is an accomplished researcher in his or her discipline.

*Childbirth Across Cultures* includes an introduction, an informational section about the authors, and 26 well-researched chapters. Divided into two parts, the first section addresses evolutionary perspectives, childbirth narratives, breast-feeding, and child spacing. The

second section covers a history of birthing in the United States and other countries, including China, Japan, Korea, India, Tibet, Thailand, the southern region of Israel, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Uganda, Solomon Islands, Aboriginal Australia, the Navajo Nation, and others. Throughout the book a theme of joy and comfort versus technology and medical procedure prevails.

The authors illuminate that medicalized birth is slowly eradicating traditional models of birthing. For thousands of years, birthing was “women’s work” with midwives attending the birthing mother. During the 18th century