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## Book Review

JOHN EMSLEY

**Better looking, better living, better loving. How Chemistry can help you achieve life's goals**

**Wiley-VCH, May 2007, 237 pp.**

price 24.90 Euro; £18-99 (hardcover)

ISBN-10 3-527-31863-1; ISBN-13 978-3-527-31863-6

Yes the title is a bit over the top, but this is an important and useful book. In clear and simple language the author explains the role of chemistry and chemical products in many aspects of everyday life. It is in a real sense an antidote to the 'no chemicals in my life' lobby.

The book is, in the author's words, 'for those who would like to know more about some of the things that they encounter in their everyday life and which are produced by the chemical and pharmaceutical industries'. Dr Emsley's aim is also to 'explain what these are and why they work as they do'. He is also concerned to discuss products suggested to have some element of risk and gives the arguments on both sides.

Areas covered are comprehensive and include cosmetics, drugs and medical advances, personal care products, chemistry and diet, minor metals and their uses, chemistry in the home and art and colour chemistry. The book is presented in a style that the lay person can easily understand. Some books written by eminent scientists have this as an objective, but few achieve this laudable

aim as well as Dr Emsley. In the opinion of this reviewer, the book can be usefully and enjoyably read by people with little or no chemical education. There is a useful glossary and almost no chemical formulae (it is an interesting question why the chemical nomenclature system, invented for simplicity and clarity, appears to be one of the greatest barriers for lay people wanting to know more about chemistry). This book is a triumph of clear communication and is full of interesting information.

Three classes of reader should benefit from and enjoy this book: academic chemists who want to know more about the outreach of the subject, teachers and lecturers who want to enrich their classes with interesting applications of the topic and (perhaps most importantly) concerned lay people with worries about chemicals in their houses, food and bodies. The problem might be that this latter group could be the people least likely to read this book as in many cases minds are already made up!

The book will explain and clarify many of the 'problems' associated with chemistry. Highly recommended generally but particularly for those whose worries about chemistry lead them (unnecessarily) to limit the variety and well-being of their own lives.

**Peter Craig**

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