book reviews


I came across this book by accident when searching for information on the 'Hormone of Lurve' as Michel Odent describes oxytocin. This book has been translated from Swedish and is the culmination of 20 years' research into the hormone, mostly by observing animal and human behaviour, as a result of the authors own experiences during childbirth.

This book is inspiring! It discusses the largely neglected physiological mechanism of 'calm and connection' which counters the 'fight or flight' mechanism so commonly described when discussing the increased stress levels we live in today. The author looks at oxytocin not only from its powerful influence on birth and breastfeeding, but in all aspects of our lives.

The book is divided into five parts:

- a description of the environment and the need to balance our stressful lives with periods of calm, in order to maintain a healthy body and mind.
- the underpinning anatomy and physiology of the nervous system in order to understand the hormone and its action.
- the effects of oxytocin on every aspect of life including birth and breastfeeding.
- the role of oxytocin in developing 'connections' - relationships.
- a discussion of some of the ways we seek the effects of oxytocin without being aware of it, massage, alcohol, smoking etc.

I would recommend that everyone should read this book. Not only does it offer good evidence for many of the midwife's activities to encourage women to give birth naturally and breastfeed successfully, but it will also enable the reader to better understand human behaviour.

Linda Wylie


This might be a good book to read to get an insight into how it feels to have trouble conceiving, to go through fertility treatment, bring premature twins into the world and cope with the problems of a sick baby, a story that could no doubt be replicated by dozens of women. The narrative is enlivened by letters she wrote to her great aunt to whose memory the book is dedicated.

Margaret Jowitt

book received

National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit Annual Report 2004

Annual report of a 'national treasure' (according to a DoH inspection team). Who's doing what, where, who's funding it, who's published what. A few interesting oddities concerning research itself - does increased funding to centres in RTCs increase recruitment to trials; how come women are recruited into RCTs and only neonatal sequalae, not maternal outcomes are looked at? Some gems - a trial of routine admission CTG in low risk women confers no neonatal benefits over intermittent auscultation (National Maternity Hospital, Dublin trial of 8,580 women)

letter

Dear Margaret

Firstly, thanks for printing my article (rant) and for your cards and words of encouragement. It was good to feel able to speak honestly about what the women here have experienced with their workings. I feel I have shared in their empowerment and am very honoured to have done so. I enjoyed your family news as it gave me an insight into who you are. Did you deliberately choose that paper with those subjects of midwifery research? I have had hardly any contact with mainstream midwifery writings. I had presumed that Ina May's ideas were all new amongst midwives, I can't believe that midwives have access to the information that was quoted here. If this is the sort of stuff recent research has come up with, what is happening? Why are women still treated in the way they are?

I'm going to subscribe to Midwifery Matters as I am interested in what's happening out there. But also we need access to straight basic information. Our local midwives are very nice and they are trying to change, but we have been lied to so much in the past that it's hard to totally believe them. At the moment a woman with a previous c-section wants to give birth at home - what is the actual risk of the scar rupturing? How do we find out? I don't want to take up your personal time but if I write questions to your paper would anyone tell us where to look? I think all most people need is straightforward information to make their decisions. Thanks again for printing my writing, it helped me a lot to write some of my feelings down. Now I've the daunting task of passing it around every one and receiving the criticisms! All the best to you in the New Year.

I am excited to think there are midwives out there trying to change things. Let's hope they can get on with it quickly.

Love

Scilla

(* I enclosed a Christmas card printed on recycled paper (old proofs) with Scilla's copy of her article. Please respond to this letter. ARM has been trying for 30 years and it still feels as if we are getting nowhere. Mj)
Copyright of Midwifery Matters is the property of Association of Radical Midwives and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.