AIMS For a better birth...

Book Reviews

Complete list of book reviews on the AIMS website

AIMS Journal, 2005, Vol 17 No 3

- Stand and Deliver by Emma Mahony; reviewed by Teresa Willis
- Midwifery Best Practice: Volume 3 edited by Sara Wickham; reviewed by Nessa McHugh

Stand and Deliver (And Other Brilliant Ways to Give Birth) by Emma Mahony

Published Harper Collins £7.99
Reviewed by Teresa Willis, Belfast NCT.
Find this book on Amazon

This look at labour and birth aims to persuade those approaching the big day that the means to achieving a good birth are within their reach. This is not an in-depth guide to a natural labour for those on their second homebirth, instead Mahony sets her sights on those women who, through fear, lack of information or denial, haven't thought past the drugs. Starting with a chapter on the negative cultural views which surround women's bodies and birth, the book gently guides women through the options available to them, options which they might not have thought or been told about by family, friends and those responsible for their care during pregnancy. She does all this with a light-hearted tone that is never preachy, presenting natural birth as something which is in every woman's reach, and not just the domain of sandalwearing Ôhippies'. Each section is short, informative and full of resources, gently guiding women towards both further reading and those organisations best placed to help them achieve the kind of birth they deserve.

The second section of the book is taken over by birth stories, which cover a wide range of births from epidurals, caesareans and inductions to the vaginal birthing of twins and a home water birth, demonstrating to women that whatever the circumstances, it can still be a positive and uplifting experience. This is reinforced by the final section of the book which guides women through the last eight weeks of pregnancy taking them through birth rights and plans, early labour and the terminology they are likely to hear.

This is not a book for those who have been there before and fought for the birth they wanted, and those expecting an indepth look into birthing naturally will be disappointed. But for a woman contemplating birth who doesn't even know where to begin, it is a great introduction to doing things differently and standing up for yourself. The no-nonsense, informative tone will appeal to even the most sceptical

reader, and the book would make a great gift for those approaching pregnancy and labour for the first time who might need a gentle nudge in the direction of a more natural approach.

Midwifery Best Practice: Volume 3 edited by Sara Wickham

Published Elsevier Edinburgh 2005 (ISBN 0-7506-8846)
Reviewed by Nessa McHugh, Midwife
Find this book on Amazon

This is the third volume in the Best Practice series that brings together original pieces in combination with articles previously published in Practising Midwife and Midwifery.

The book is divided into four main sections ranging from Women, Midwives and Choice through to Stories and Reflection, there are also four subsections which further home in on specific areas of interest. As such this book represents a rich array of contemporary childbirth issues. The information on the back indicates that the book should be essential reading for midwives which is certainly true; although some of the sections are specifically geared towards the ongoing professional development of midwives, there is much that would be of interest to anyone involved in any part of the wide spectrum of pregnancy, birth and parenting.

The editor is a well-known midwifery academic and has put together articles in such a way as to embrace the perspectives of both midwives and parents. Practising Midwife represents the more accessible end of the midwifery journal spectrum and is usually easy to read, whereas Midwifery aims to present a more academic and research-orientated approach. The careful juxtaposition of journal articles and original pieces are woven together to create an interesting balance of the personal and the theoretical, each one serving to enhance the other.

An edited book of this nature may not always appeal to everyone. If you are someone who already subscribes to these journals you may not feel inclined to get a repeat of articles you may have already read - even though there is some new material included. However for people who do not have a subscription or access to the journals this volume contains an insight into the contemporary themes of midwifery, pregnancy and childbirth.

The Best Practice volumes are invaluable in that they offer a rich tapestry of research and thoughts that are easy to dip into but may compel you to read the book from cover to cover.