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Book Reviews: Informed Choice in Maternity Care & Pregnancy and birth - a guide for deaf women

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Informed Choice in Maternity Care by Mavis Kirkham

Palgrave, 2004

Reviewed by Jean Robinson

The following review was first published in the AIMS Journal, Vol 17, No 1, 2005 and is reprinted here in view of its relevance to this particular journal.

Find this book on Amazon

This is a jewel of a book and it has come out at just the right time, when "choice" for pregnant and birthing women is actually official policy. . It summarises much of the useful research on the barriers to women knowing about, and choosing from the care available, and how inadequate the range of options is.("Would you like oral or subcutaneous vitamin K for your baby?" No mention that you could refuse it altogether) Here the authors draw lessons from the research which help us to see things at a much deeper level, and we come away feeling not just better informed, but wiser.. I have seldom wanted to re-read chunks of a book as soon as I had finished it, but this one I re-started the next day, particularly the rich first chapter by Nadine Edwards, and the closing chapter by the Editor. Then I dipped into bits of the middle as well.

How naive we all were when we fell on the well-written, detailed informed choice leaflets from MIDIRS with such relief when they appeared.. At last women would be empowered. We should have foreseen that obstetricians would ban from their units the ones they disapproved of, midwives would be choosy over who got what, and everyone would feel threatened at the possibility of women knowing too much. The researchers described what happened as they watched. Julia Simpson's description of doctor's behaviour is even more enlightening. If that is how they talk when they know a researcher is watching, what must it be like the rest of the time? "As obstetricians we need to learn to start being very

manipulative with the women, because they are being very manipulative with us."

A book you can't afford to miss.

Pregnancy and birth - a guide for deaf women by Sabina Iqbal

Published by Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) in association with the National Childbirth Trust (ISBN 1 904296 03 3)

Reviewed by Penny Davidson, Student Midwife

Find this book on Amazon

This book is clearly written in plain English, well laid out and includes lots of photographs, and covers all you would expect in a book for women about the childbearing year. The author is a deaf social worker, and the advisory panel includes NCT antenatal teaching tutors and obstetricians, though no midwives. I enjoyed the focus on the real stories of deaf women and their partners. These illustrate the difficulties often faced in obtaining effective communication support when accessing maternity services and make suggestions for facilitating this. There is a very good chapter of information for health professionals; up to date advice on nutrition and antenatal screening; a thorough glossary and list of organisations for further information. If I had to nitpick I would say that, as ever, advice directs you to a GP rather than a midwife when you are first pregnant; it rather glosses over breech presentation (when the baby is coming bottom first); and while there is a photograph of good positioning for breastfeeding, it is showing poor attachment with the baby on the nipple only.

I would recommend this book to deaf women.