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Dynamic Positions in Birth

A fresh look at how women's bodies work in labour.

Margaret Jowitt

The cover of the book tells the reader that this book will take a fresh look at how women's bodies work in labour and the author has done very well in meeting this expectation.

There are ten chapters in this book which are titled well including 'The choreography of the uterus in labour and birth' and 'Making birth better'. Each chapter has appropriate images to help the author convey the message to the reader. Although the images in the beginning of the book may be considered better than in the latter chapters they are still relevant to the reader and support the reader throughout the book.

This book takes you on a journey from the very beginning of our knowledge of birth and the furniture that was used to support women through the ages in birth. There are also well chosen excerpts throughout the book including one of the first midwifery books known to us today which the reader will be surprised to see gives good advice even though it was written hundreds of years ago!

The book gives a good overview of the research available and has a chapter dedicated to research evidence although evidence is discussed throughout the book. There is a lot of different avenues of research discussed within the chapter and it can sometimes feel that the research element it is spread a little thinly but it does give a rounded discussion which includes the most up to date National guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and the National Institute of Clinical Expertise as an example.

The book has very good sub headings within chapters which allows the reader to pause mid chapter if necessary such as within the 'Active Uterus' chapter, sub headings include 'The Incubator' 'The Lifeline' 'The ejection seat' which are fun and enticing for the reader to continue.

The author has been able to explain well their rationale behind their ideas and suggests that instead of considering the position of the fetus and/or the position of the mother in labour the interaction of the two combined together in labour is the most important. Using this idea, the author begins to suggest some changes to thinking within midwifery practice (and obstetrics) that are certainly tempting for those who have a strong belief in normal birth and the woman's ability to do so. The idea that the fetus is not just a passive participant in labour is also raised and the role of the fetus in navigating their way through the maternal pelvis is discussed at length but is also interesting and readable.

The latter chapters concentrate further on the maternal pelvis and in particular the uniqueness of the human pelvis which is described as nature's compromise between 'staying pregnant, walking upright and giving birth'. They also begin to discuss at length the technology that has grown around birth, its usefulness and effectiveness and the evidence that supports it which unsurprisingly does not necessarily support the needs of the woman in labour and birth.

The final chapter is dedicated to 'Making birth better' and planning for the future. Although admirable, it does not always account for the choices that women sometimes make in labour, such as epidural anaesthesia and the fact that this is not the midwives' choice but the mother's. Nor does it fully account for the differences in the skills and knowledge that the midwife today needs to acquire due to the broad range of care they need to be able to give but assumes all midwives are comfortable in birthing women in any position and unfortunately although this may be a sensible assumption it is not necessarily a correct one. The book also has a comprehensive reference and index for the reader to refer to when needed and to return to as often as required.

Overall, this is a great book which is easy to read and supports midwives with the evidence behind their decision making. The author's passion for birth and positioning in labour and birth is clear and feels almost motivational at times. An excellent book for a midwife who wants to maintain

professional reading or a midwife who wishes to gently remind themselves of the anatomy and physiology of the pelvis in order to support women to birth in the position that they want to.