

New thinking on improving maternity care: international perspectives

Sarah Church, Lucy Frith, Marie-Claire Balaam et al (eds)

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This insightful book is a collection of chapters examining issues pertinent to maternity care and midwifery practice across cultures and continents. Edited by academics from around the globe, the text is the result of comparative research involving 100 members from 26 countries. Through the lens of a range of theories including salutogenesis, complexity theory and organisational culture, the authors offer a fresh perspective on practical topics, including fetal screening, care for migrant women, midwifery leadership and the migration of midwives across the global health care environment.

A number of chapters address current challenges in maternity research practice. Karin Minnie and Christa van der Walt's chapter on knowledge transfer expertly outlines how study findings should be individually 'packaged' to target specific audiences. Elsewhere, Valerie Smith, Cecily Begley, Mechthild Gross and Declan Devane highlight how heterogeneity of outcomes between studies is hampering evidence synthesis. This problem is preventing collation of valuable findings which could potentially influence practice change. The authors thus argue the case for 'core outcome sets' which all research on any given topic should measure, ensuring

comparability and maximising the value of research.

Permeating the book is the theory of 'salutogenesis', which multiple authors assert should underpin maternity research and practice. A salutogenic approach focuses on factors that promote and maintain good health and wellbeing, rather than those that cause ill-health and disease (pathogenesis). It is an interesting concept that perhaps challenges the sense of risk aversion that has come to characterise 21st century maternity care and runs in congruence with the notion that childbirth should be viewed as normal until proven otherwise.

The penultimate chapter, Technology in childbirth by Valerie Smith et al is a must-read for practising midwives. It outlines the process and results of the first systematic review of women's views regarding fetal heart rate monitoring in labour. The review provides valuable insights into why some women express preference for EFM while others find it a source of anxiety and discomfort. Given the widespread use of EFM in low-risk women despite National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommendations (NICE 2014), the findings make for thought-provoking reading.

This book demonstrates the value of international comparative research in learning what kind of care is best and for whom, in any given setting. It will not only be of interest to midwives, obstetricians, activists, researchers and policy makers but should be compulsory reading for students of midwifery, medicine and social sciences. **tpm**

REFERENCES

NICE (2014). Intrapartum care for healthy women and babies, London: NICE. www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg190

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International Perspectives

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