

toward medical tests and procedures throughout pregnancy and birth. It is the latter high-tech model that continues to dominate obstetrical care in North America. The authors also report a substantial increase in the use of the doula, a woman who offers support and comfort during labour. This increase could be understood as the need for the “human touch” in response to the machines and gadgetry that dominate most women’s birthing experiences.

Korte and Scaer demystify obstetrical terms and procedures and they debunk some popular and medical myths about how to achieve a safe birth. As well, they show that little medical evidence exists for even the most common obstetrical practices. Do note, however, that the text is not a mere disparaging of technologized births, designed to instill guilt in mothers who have availed themselves of technology during birth. Rather, as its title so aptly states, the book focuses on the information necessary to make choices for a “good birth, a safe birth.”

The work is accessible and well-organized. It includes appendices with contact and reference information, some of it, however, more relevant to the American reader. Moreover, as a mother myself, who soon will be leaving behind her reproductive years, the book provided answers to many of my own questions.

Pregnancy the Natural Way

Zita West
New York: DK Publishing, 2001

Reviewed by Maria Mikolchak

Pregnancy the Natural Way is a program for pregnant women. It starts as early as planning for conception and ends with the postpartum period. In many ways this is a traditional guide: the author divides pregnancy into three trimesters and provides information on mother’s and baby’s development, accompanied by advice on nutrition, exercise, common ailments, and specific pregnancy-related problems. What makes this book different from numerous other guides on pregnancy, however, is its focus on natural treatment options. The author, herself a midwife and acupuncturist, strongly advocates natural products, non-invasive treatments, and drug-free methods of pain relief that are harmless to mother and baby.

Each of the first six chapters of the book (“Planning for Conception,” “The First Trimester,” “The Second Trimester,” “The Third Trimester,” “Preparation for Labor and Delivery,” and “Postpartum Period”) starts with conventional information on pregnancy and ends with complementary treatments.

These treatments include acupuncture, acupressure, reflexology, yoga and meditation, homeopathy, western herbalism, and hypnotherapy. In addition, chapter seven deals specifically with complementary therapies and outlines the treatments suggested in the first six chapters. This is a very informative chapter and it addresses concerns women may have about the safety and suitability of complementary treatments.

Despite the merits of the book, it has several problems. The cover misleadingly advertises the book as “ideal either as quick reference or a complete guide.” The book certainly cannot serve as a “complete guide,” since information on mother’s and baby’s development is sketchy and will not satisfy women who want a detailed week-by-week, if not day-by-day, description of pregnancy offered in other pregnancy guides. Another difficulty is the author’s excessive optimism about natural remedies. For example, West states unequivocally that “stretch marks can be prevented by consuming food sources of zinc, such as ginger, cheese, and wholegrains” (80). If it were that simple, stretch marks would have been eliminated long ago. The major problem with the book, however, is that it prescribes specific medications for complications in pregnancy such as high blood pressure, protein in the urine, and visual disturbances (84), and asserts that “if your pregnancy is normal and healthy, self-help remedies are safe” (149). Some of the conditions mentioned can hardly be considered part of a normal and healthy pregnancy and would certainly require professional attention. Thus for “sudden onset, protein in the urine, and symptoms that are worse after 3 p.m.” (85) rather than taking Belladonna 6c, as the author suggests, the pregnant woman should see her doctor.

Some advice in the book might seem inappropriate in many parts of the world, including the United States. Such advice would include the “key tip” to give up work by the 32nd-34th week of pregnancy (94), which for many women is not possible because of inadequate maternity leave provisions.

Pregnancy the Natural Way will be interesting and entertaining reading for women who rightly consider pregnancy a natural physiological event and who seek non-conventional treatments.

Surrogates and Other Mothers: The Debates Over Assisted Reproduction

Ruth Macklin
Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994

Reviewed by Robin L. E. Hemenway

In 1884, in a secret procedure, a Philadelphia physician named William