

While these diseases affect many women, they often are not recognized or diagnosed, either by the suffering women or by professionals. Many women cannot clearly identify what is bothering them and they often do not know where to seek help so they can get the attention they require. This book provides descriptions that will aid in this identification. In fact, there is no single portrait of an alcoholic woman; there are many. Because of its many manifestations, alcoholism often is difficult to identify by others and by alcoholic women themselves. Even with the identification, asking for and finding help usually is a lonely and difficult task. The same challenges confront women who are clinically depressed.

Peets uses the stories of others, as well as her own personal story of her mother and family. An important aspect of this book is the connection the author draws between her mother's alcoholism and depression and her own life. Across the book, Peets offers as examples the many preventive steps against alcoholism and depression that she has taken and will continue to take throughout her life.

I congratulate Christine Peets for her honesty and courage. Writing *With Humor and Hope* clearly was cathartic for the author and the book will assist readers who hope to interrupt the multigenerational effects of substance abuse and depression in their own lives. Peets includes a selective bibliography and a useful list of international resources.

## Midwifery and Childbirth in America

Rooks, Judith Pence, S. Charles, and M. D. Mahan.  
Temple Univ Press; 1999.

### Reviewed by Ruth Nemzoff

*Midwifery and Childbirth in America* is not a book to give your pregnant daughter to read in her spare moments. It is too comprehensive, well researched, and detailed. But it is an appropriate gift for anyone who may be planning to attend nursing or medical school. Rooks has written a comprehensive, balanced, and eminently readable book about midwifery and childbirth in America. The book provides a complete history of the accreditation, licensure, and education of nurse midwives and direct entry midwives. It also provides data on the use of midwives. Most interesting is Rooks's review of studies that have assessed the quality, safety, and effectiveness of midwifery in the United States. She notes that surprisingly few studies compare the effectiveness of specific interventions used by midwives and obstetricians.

This book gives a clear explanation of the differences between the philosophies of midwives and physicians. While midwives see birth as a natural process needing little intervention, physicians view birth as potentially dangerous. Despite the sometimes uncooperative relations between midwives and medical doctors, Rooks explains the profound impact midwives have had on medical practitioners. The influence of midwives has led to the cessation of some medical practices that potentially caused harm to birthing mothers, such as shaving pubic hair and giving enemas to labouring women.

Although she recognizes the role of obstetricians in complicated births, Rooks is convinced that midwifery provides safe, effective childbirth assistance. She notes, for example, that normal births attended by midwives result in fewer cesarean sections, fewer episiotomies and other expensive interventions. To ensure appropriate care for birthing women, Rooks suggests that obstetricians and midwives alike assess all birth interventions.

Various laws and the need for insurance coverage, as well as the dwindling number of births per thousand in America, provide disincentives for allowing midwives to practice in the United States. Physician supervision of midwives is required and hospital births are advantaged. As a result, it has been difficult for midwifery to gain a foothold in the United States, despite the data from Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan that strengthens the case for the use of midwives as safe birth attendants.

### **Birth by Design: Pregnancy, Maternity Care, and Midwifery in North America and Europe**

Devries, Raymond, Cecilia Benoit, Edwin R. Van Teijlingen,  
and Sirpa Wrede, eds.  
New York: Routledge, 2001.

#### **Reviewed by Amy Mullin**

*Birth by Design* provides well-researched, cross-cultural comparisons of maternity care practices in nine European and North American countries, with a heavy emphasis on Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. While the countries involved differ in the ways they fund health care, all are highly developed, technologically sophisticated countries. Most medical specialties in these countries are marked by technical uniformity, but the countries involved are markedly different in their approaches to maternity care. They differ in the extent to which they see pregnancy as a medical