

Book Review

Examination of the Newborn and Neonatal Health A Multidimensional Approach, Lorna Davies & Sharon McDonald, Elsevier, Edinburgh, (2008).

I valued the opportunity to review this new text Examination of the Newborn and Neonatal Health: A Multidimensional Approach. The book is aptly titled. It is a comprehensive text covering conception to the newborn period. The book is clearly set out. The first chapter provides the reader with an overview of the remaining chapters. Davies and McDonald inform the reader that the examination of the newborn is the heart of the text. In chapter two, Practical Examination of the Newborn, the reader is presented with the practical aspects of a newborn examination as well as other, often missed elements. The context of the examination, timing, environment and who is best placed to carry out the examination ensures the reader has a thorough understanding. A large number of Internet resources are provided, however, the websites listed are all United Kingdom (U.K.) based and are not always relevant for the Australian context. All illustrations are in black and white. Although this reduces cost to the buyer, for students visualising variations from normal for the first time, colour is a valuable asset to learning and memory retention.

Chapter three covers the chronology of embryological development. Legislation relevant to embryo research is discussed which provides interesting information to form the basis for debates amongst students. Again the legislation is U.K. and is not necessarily the same as that in use in other countries. Chapter four examines antenatal screening and the outcomes for the newborn. Screening for infectious diseases, Down's syndrome and other fetal anomalies are considered. Following each section, issues for clinical practice are discussed. At the end of this chapter there is a list of useful websites again most are U.K. based.

The chapters by Lorna Davies and Michel Odent are my favourites. Chapter five, by Davies, informs the reader of “ the significance of influences during gestation on the development and growth of the embryo and fetus.” (p.79). Davies includes the psychological influences as well as physical and chemical. Odent, in the following chapter looks at primal health research. He covers the consequences of intrapartum events such as impaired capacity to love. The behavioural effects of hormones and

practical implications of interference in the physiological process of pregnancy and birthing are explained.

Chapters seven, eight and nine take the reader from maternal and newborn transition: adjustment to extra-uterine life, through to the six-week follow-up assessment. Chapter seven presents an integrated approach to transition at birth, discussing the mother-baby dyad as well as the more physiological adjustments required such as establishment of respirations, cardiovascular changes and metabolic alterations. Chapter eight provides a comprehensive overview of neonatal resuscitation, including how to prepare the environment, the parents, and ourselves. Use of diagrams and illustrations assist the reader to visualise resuscitation techniques. Chapter nine presents relevant information aided by commonly used charts to assess the newborn and infant up till six weeks of age. Primary reflexes, neurological and behavioural development, and physiological growth assessments are discussed in depth.

Chapter ten, Congenital Cardiac Anomalies in the Newborn, is excellent in its presentation of causes, effects and available treatments. The use of diagrams, illustrations and pictures aids in visual learning. Chapter eleven covers the newborn eye, an area often neglected in texts. Anatomy and physiology, function, ocular disorders, and screening and investigative techniques are presented. Chapter twelve, Congenital Abnormality: Screening, Diagnosis and Communication, covers the usual sections on incidence, classifications, screening and diagnosis. This chapter, however, presents knowledge on how information should be presented to women. The power of language and abnormality is discussed, and a section on what parents want from health professionals (p.203) is included.

Chapters thirteen and fourteen cover the clinical issues neonatal jaundice and neonatal skin and cord care. Chapter thirteen, Neonatal Jaundice, discusses practice implications for the health professionals, cross-referencing information provided in other chapters. Chapter fourteen presents the reader with up-to-date information about baby skin care products and proposed new guidelines for neonatal skin care. Although newborn screening and immunisation topics are discussed in chapter fifteen, the information is contextualised for U.K. health professionals. Australian midwives would need to check Australian guidelines and policies.

A number of chapters are followed by a personal story, presented by women dealing with issues examined within the chapter. Readers are invited to view the chapter content from a woman's perspective rather than a health professional's or academic viewpoint. Parental stories remind the reader of the humanness, strength and fragility of childbirth. Overall, this was a very informative text, clearly set out and easy to read. Neonatal nursing students or midwifery students electing to do a neonatal course would find this text helpful in their subject matter. Australian midwives interested in reading this text need to be aware however, as the authors themselves have stated, the book is primarily aimed at midwives working in the U.K. (p.3).