Reviews

Recommended Reading and Viewing

Book review by Sally Hartman, RNC, MSN, IBCLC, FACCE

Video review by Pamela D. Hill, PhD, RN, FAAN

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Book Review

Expecting Trouble: The Myth of Prenatal Care in America by Thomas H. Strong, Jr., MD. Published November 2000 by New York University Press.

Dr. Thomas H. Strong's book, *Expecting Trouble: The Myth of Prenatal Care in America*, is a thought-provoking, scorching review of prenatal care in America. Dr. Strong introduces himself as a "third generation doctor and a second generation obstetrician and a published researcher." He is a professional who easily states that many of the benefits ascribed to prenatal care are unsupported by medical research and need to be abandoned. He uses varied and current research to support his arguments and describes for the reader what makes up reliable research reports. The book is yet another blow to the medical community's claim, "This is the way we've always done it, therefore it is the best way." Strong believes that birth should be a normal, physiologic process, not a pathological process that needs medical interventions. He flouts his own peers' specialization and supports the midwifery style of practice.

In his book, Dr. Strong covers six areas he believes contribute to the poor infant mortality rates in the U.S. First, he discusses the historical, political, and scientific basis of prenatal care, which he declares promotes self-preservation rather than quality of care. Secondly, Strong discusses the maldistribution of prenatal resources. Not every facility should compete for the high-risk mothers and babies; these patients should be transferred to regional centers of excellence. Thirdly, Strong describes the undue medicalization of pregnancy. Research shows that midwives and physicians caring for the average

woman have equivalent outcomes. The fourth area of concern is the unwarranted or misplaced malpractice litigation. Although retribution should exist for malpractice, litigation in this country has not produced any real improvements in health care. Strong then introduces the fifth area of concern: avaricious health insurers. Managed care has forced physicians to choose between their own economic well-being and the well-being of their patients.

Finally, Strong discusses the mothers themselves. While 50% of all pregnancies are unwanted at conception, Strong claims making reliable birth control easily accessible can make the biggest difference in infant mortality. Women with wanted pregnancies plan and prepare before pregnancy begins; they adopt healthy lifestyles and keep themselves fit. They invest time, effort, and energy into giving birth to a healthy child.

Expecting Trouble should be on the reading list of every women's health care provider, childbirth educator, obstetrical nurse, and health policy maker. It is important to pull away from standards of care that do not reflect evidence-based practice. Dr. Strong's book plainly states that women are not being provided the best of care in America—certainly the most technological and expensive care, but not the best.

The lay public may be shocked by Dr. Strong's declarations. The explanation of research reviews and the sheer numbers of supportive evidence may lead them to confront their care givers with the questions suggested in Dr. Strong's book and, then, seek a midwife for the uncomplicated woman-centered care they deserve.

Video Review

A Premie Needs His Mother: First Steps to Breastfeeding Your Premature Baby

(a two-part video, also available in DVD format):

Part 1: "The Benefits" and "Pumping" (35 min.)

Part 2: "Transitioning to the Breast" and "Coming Home" (21 min.)

Produced by Jane Morton, M.D.

For the mother of a premature baby, Part 1 of this video series is a definite must-see prior to delivery. With its beautiful photography and music, this video promotes the value of mother's milk and assures the lactating mother that only her milk is "perfectly matched" for her baby and "a gift that only she can give." Using current

research, the video emphasizes both the short- and long-term benefits of mother's milk for the premie baby, such as strengthening the immune system, assisting brain and neurological development, and providing protection from chronic diseases later in life. The benefits to the mother in providing mother's milk are also emphasized. The last section of Part 1 clearly describes how and why to prepare the breasts prior to using mechanical expression for maximum milk ejection reflex. It also explains the necessity of starting pumping early after delivery and establishing a daily schedule for frequent expressions. In addition, the nurse lactation consultant demonstrates proper placement of the pump flange onto the breast, including a discussion on suction settings. Clearly, the mother is portrayed as an integral part of the team, providing the nutrition for her baby. After viewing this video, the mother of a premature baby cannot help but feel truly empowered in providing mother's milk to her baby.

Part 2 of this video is a must-see for the lactating mother prior to holding her premie. This video describes the advantages of kangaroo mother care, as identified in extensive research. It identifies the challenges that the premie must overcome in order to breastfeed and demonstrates techniques for the mother to use for proper grasp. The relaxed, positive approach conveyed in the video sets an excellent example. In addition, mothers of premies discuss their thoughts and feelings, which provides the viewer with realistic expectations when working with the premature infant.

Ordering Information

Book: *Expecting Trouble: The Myth of Prenatal Care in America* by Thomas H. Strong, MD.

- Available for purchase through the Lamaze Bookstore and Media Center. To place your order, please visit www.lamaze.org or call 1-877-952-6293.

Video: *A Premie Needs His Mother: First Steps to Breastfeeding Your Premature Baby*, produced by Jane Morton, MD.

- To order this two-part video (also available in DVD format), please visit www.breastmilk solutions.com or call 1-888-JMORTON (566-7866).