

Book review

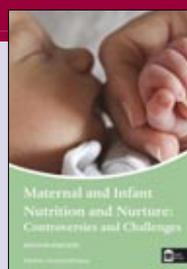
Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture: Controversies and Challenges, Second edition

Edited by Victoria Hall Moran

Quay Books, 2013

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Improved nutrition is increasingly seen as an achievable way of enhancing health outcomes for mothers and infants, both in the short and long-term. There are already many good books that examine this issue; finding space in a crowded market for another is not easy. Most of us work in an increasingly specialised area (eg preterm infants) and have a tendency to go for books relevant to our niche interests. It is always useful though, to see things from a different perspective.

Maternal and Infant Nutrition and Nurture is a book to read and browse, rather than a definitive source of text for,

say, nutrient requirements. There are 10 chapters covering quite a diverse mix of subjects: from biology (antioxidant micronutrients in pregnancy) to practice (feeding preterm infants), and policy (breast milk substitutes) to psychosociology (nutrition in breastfeeding adolescents). When I first looked at the chapter titles I was a little confused – exactly who is this book aimed at? If I'm honest, I probably wouldn't have bought this book, but as I carried it around – it's small and easily fits into a day bag – I found myself dipping into a chapter here and there. I certainly came across

perspectives or insights I wouldn't ordinarily gain.

Overall, it is well-written and well-referenced but more importantly, it has a readable style. I particularly liked the chapters on reasons why breastfeeding mothers weigh their babies and professional views on peer support for breastfeeding. One of the greatest shortfalls in current medical or nursing training is a lack of understanding of qualitative research methods, or a failure to see issues from anything other than a pure biomedical perspective. A wise professor once taught me that practitioners should be interested in social behaviours as well as cellular behaviours if we are to improve child health. This book gives a nice mix of both.

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