



What We're Reading...

October 2003



My Breasts, My Choice: Journeys Through Surgery

Barbara Brown, Maureen Aslin and Betsy Carey
(Sumach Press, 2003)

Many women and men either choose to have breast or chest surgery, or find that it is a medical necessity. Unfortunately very few resources are available that address the needs of these people. In *My Breasts, My Choice* the authors deal with both the emotional and practical issues faced by individuals undergoing breast surgery. This inspiring and heartfelt read is divided into two parts. Part I consists of the images and stories of 10 people who have experienced breast reduction surgery, augmentation, breast cancer diagnostics, reconstructive and other surgical procedures. These moving stories are told by breast cancer survivors, transsexuals, and women and men choosing surgery for health and personal reasons who want to share their stories and start talking about this important issue. Part II consists of 10 articles that introduce breast surgery procedures in an accessible way, as well as explore alternative methods of self-care both before and after the surgery. Throughout the book the authors encourage a body-positive, sex-positive, and pro-choice perspective that celebrates and validates the women and men in these pages and the decisions they have made.

Danielle Allard
CWHN, Database Clerk

September 2003



Like Family: Growing Up in Other People's Houses, A Memoir

By Paula McLain
(Little Brown, 2003)

Paula McLain is known more for her award-winning poetry than as a writer of memoirs, and it shows - but in the best possible way. The first thing that strikes the reader about *Like Family* is that the author has chosen her words very carefully, fastening her story to a

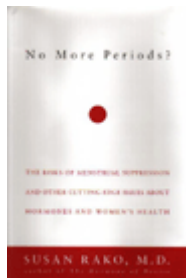
spectacularly stark but beautifully resonant prose. And with this poet's voice, McLain reveals in waves of childhood memory what it was like to grow up in foster homes, buffeted from family to family, never quite feeling at 'home'.

Like Family in many ways resembles the classic adolescent novel by Judy Blume, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, full of nostalgia and tender tales of going through those awkward teenage years. Except punctuating what would otherwise be a fairly ordinary adolescence are McLain's memories of being beaten by her foster-'mother' and her repeated sexual abuse at the hands of yet another foster-'father'.

But somehow *Like Family* does not reside only in the bleak terrain of foster families. Rather, it is the mixture of sweet nostalgia for growing up combined with the harsh emotional scars of neglect and abuse that makes this book remarkable. McLain leaves the reader with the knowledge that a child is not the sum total of the abuse she has experienced at the hands of others, but somewhere, between the neglect and mistreatment, a child is able to create a space and a life that is her very own.

Kathleen O'Grady
Director of Communications

August 2003



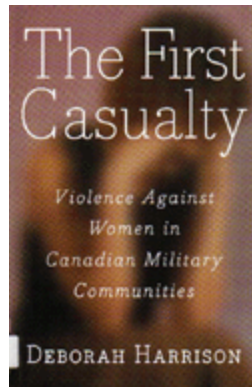
No More Periods? The Risks of Menstrual Suppression and Other Cutting-Edge Issues About Hormones and Women's Health

Susan Rako, M.D.
(Harmony Books, 2003)

Menstrual suppression, the cessation of a woman's period using hormones, has recently become a hot topic in women's health. Many health professionals and drug companies are suggesting that it is a safe and preferable option for women to suppress their periods if they are not trying to become pregnant. In her book, *No More Periods*, Susan Rako argues that this is a dangerous idea that does not take into consideration the medical risks associated with menstrual suppression such as osteoporosis, heart attacks, strokes and cancer. She is concerned that members of the medical community have not provided women with enough information about the implications of menstrual suppression. A gap exists that once filled, will cause women to think long and hard before choosing to stop their periods. This book attempts to fill that gap by discussing frankly and honestly the far reaching implications of what it means not only to stop one's period but also alter the whole menstrual and female reproductive cycle.

Danielle Allard
Database Clerk

July 2003



The First Casualty: Violence against Women in Canadian Military Communities

Deborah Harrison
(James Lorimer & Company, 2002)

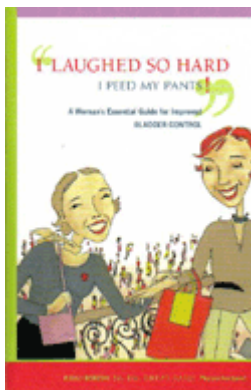
In "The First Casualty" Deborah Harrison argues that within the Canadian military an environment exists where violence against women is both encouraged and hidden. Because the military relies on aggressive male behavior, because it is based on a

model where you don't question the boss, and because it values secrecy, a culture exists where military personnel often abuse their partners and this fact is kept well hidden within the military community.

Drawing from extensive interviews with military personnel and spouses of military personnel the author uses personal stories and first hand accounts to explore why violence against women occurs within military communities. The book begins by discussing violence against women and the military way of life. It then looks at the services currently available to spouses of military personnel and determines that these services are inadequate, leaving military spouses isolated and vulnerable. It concludes by making recommendations to improve services. While the subject matter of the book is difficult, the tone is not hopeless. The author uses the courageous voices of women who have survived domestic abuse to end the secrecy and create positive change.

Danielle Allard
Database Clerk

June 2003



"I Laughed So Hard I Peed My Pants!" : A Woman's Essential Guide for Improved Bladder Control

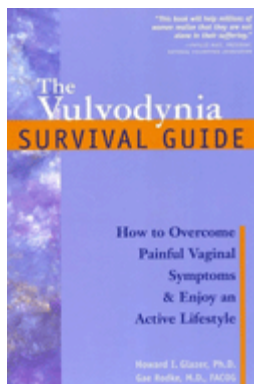
Kelli Berzuk
IPPC--Incontinence and Pelvic Pain Clinic (2002)

Urinary incontinence (UI) is one of those prevalent conditions that people joke about, as in this book's title. But loss of bladder control isn't very funny. UI can cause women to avoid laughing for fear of losing control, or lead to chronic sleep deprivation from waking up hourly to pee. It can even confine them to their homes for fear of losing control in public. "I laughed so hard I peed my pants!" is an easy to follow self-help guide to UI,

written by Winnipeg physiotherapist Kelli Berzuk. With clear illustrations and straightforward prose, Berzuk explains the physiology of bladder control, and presents a step-by-step approach to preventing and treating UI. While she stresses that prevention is important, there is plenty of hope for women who already suffer UI. Many women can significantly improve their control by doing pelvic floor exercises and avoiding bladder irritants in their diet. Berzuk's book will be a useful guide for any women seeking to understand and deal with this issue.

Alex Merrill
Health Educator

May 2003



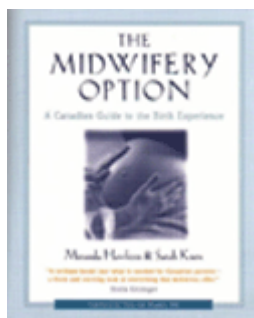
The Vulvodynia Survival Guide: How to Overcome Painful Vaginal Symptoms & Enjoy an Active Lifestyle

Howard I. Glazer and Gae Rodke
(New Harbinger Publications, 2002)

Vulvodynia is a chronic vulvar discomfort or pain, characterized by burning, stinging, irritation or rawness, and painful intercourse. These symptoms are not caused by an infection or skin disease. And as with most chronic pain conditions, it can have a profound impact on a woman's quality of life, affecting her ability to engage in sexual activity and interfering with daily functioning (e.g., sitting at a desk, engaging in physical exercise, participating in social activities, etc.). These limitations can negatively affect self-image and lead to depression. To make matters worse, when it comes to vulvovaginal pain disorders, there is a true lack of knowledge in the medical community - many doctors do not yet even acknowledge the condition as a real problem with a physical component! As the authors contend, since the medical community is not yet up to speed on vulvodynia, those women who suspect they have this condition must be in the know. They present the reader with medical information and self-help solutions to identify and avoid triggers, modify diet to reduce symptoms, find knowledgeable medical help, reduce or eliminate debilitating pain, and begin to enjoy healthy sexual relations and daily activities.

Barbara Bourrier-LaCroix
Clearinghouse Coordinator

April 2003



The Midwifery Option: A Canadian guide to the birth experience

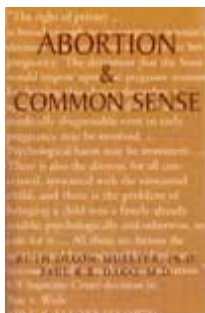
Miranda Hawkins and Sarah Knox
(HarperCollins, 2003)

At first glance, this book seems to be written exclusively for expecting women, providing a great deal of "how to" information and explaining what midwifery is all about. It combines factual guidance as well as beautiful birth stories, all seen through the eyes of the labouring women, the parent in the first days postpartum or the mother invited to support another woman in labour. And yet, the authors of this book, midwifery activists who want to share the inspiration they found in their birth processes, also give the reader a view of Canadian midwifery at this moment in history. They recount that not only has the demand for more family-

centered, holistic birth services grown, midwifery is also seen as the answer to the predictions of a shortage of obstetric care providers in the next few decades.

Barbara Bourrier-LaCroix
Clearinghouse Coordinator

March 2003



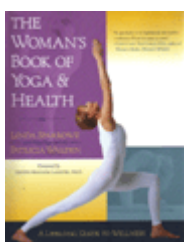
Abortion & Common Sense

Ruth Dixon and Paul K.B. Dagg
(Xlibris, 2002)

"Abortion" is a word that, when uttered in public, elicits strong emotions, deeply held convictions and divisive debate. Yet, about half of all unplanned pregnancies in the world end up in induced abortion, and four-fifths occur in developing countries. Some women end their pregnancies safely and legally, yet so many more are forced to do so clandestinely and often dangerously. The authors of this book offer a fact-based, common sense account of how and why women have abortions, and what can be done to make them safe. In the first section, they explore a variety of personal, social, economic and health issues affecting women and couples in their efforts to regulate their fertility and the role that safe and unsafe abortion plays in this endeavor. In the second part, they look at the legal, medical, and political institutions that shape the environment in which abortion occurs. The authors conclude with the need to ensure that all abortions are performed correctly, legally, and humanely, and that it be understood as a normal part of good medical care.

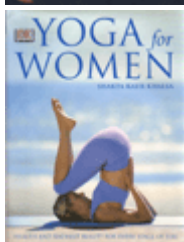
Barbara Bourrier-LaCroix
Clearinghouse Coordinator

February 2003



The Woman's Book of Yoga and Health

Linda Sparlowe with Yoga Sequences by Patricia Waldon
(Shambhala, 2002)



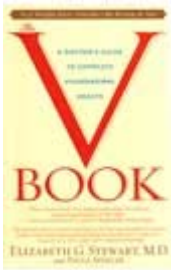
Yoga for Women

Shakta Kaur Khalsa
(Dorling Kindersley Ltd., 2002)

Yoga offers something to women at any stage of our lives. *The Woman's Book of Yoga* and *Health and Yoga for Women* are both wonderful resources for women beginning or continuing their practice of yoga. Each include a wide variety of yoga poses and sequences tailored to the different passages of women's lives. There are poses for PMS, perimenopause, menopause, and beyond. There are sequences to help prevent or deal with osteoporosis, depression and heart disease. *The Woman's Book of Yoga and Health* looks at the spectrum of issues leading to disordered eating and has a sequence designed by Iyengar-trained Patricia Waldon to strengthen and energize girls' and women's self-image. Both books are splendidly illustrated with photographs, and include highly readable descriptions of the health benefits and the spiritual teachings of yoga.

Alex Merrill
Health Educator

January 2003



The V book: A doctor's guide to complete vulvovaginal health

Elizabeth G. Stewart and Paula Spencer
(Bantam Books, 2002)

A peculiar feature of North American society has been to shroud our vulvas and vaginas in mystery. Women speak of the places "down there" with eyes lowered. Yet, millions of us suffer from vulvar and vaginal problems, such as constant itching, interminable discharge, and pain during sexual intercourse. Luckily, Elizabeth Stewart, a gynaecologist with a full-time specialty practice in vulvovaginal care, offers us this guide on vulvovaginal matters, including the latest research translated into understandable explanations. The book is divided into three parts: what to know and do when a woman is well, what to know and do when she develops a problem, and an in-depth guide to specific problems and their treatments.

Barbara Bourrier-LaCroix
Clearinghouse Coordinator

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