Book Review

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Milk Matters: Infant Feeding & Immune Disorder

Maureen Minchin © 2014 BookPOD, 836 pages, hardcover, \$95.00

Available from: <https://www.amazon.com/Milk-Matters-Infant-feeding-disorder/dp/0959318313/>

Milk Matters by Maureen Minchin is an interesting read. It extols the virtues of breastfeeding and relates the emergence of allergic and immunologic issues to the relative lack of breastfeeding in our societies today. It is a well-referenced combination of evolution, history, politics, ongoing research, and theories. It is a trilogy where the first book is devoted to how genetics play a role in our immune systems. The second book is a historical review of the creation of breastmilk substitutes, and the third book gives advice to help solve some of the problems created by our diets. Some parts of the book are technical, but the forward wisely directs professionals and laypersons to the sections that may be the most meaningful to them.

A dry sense of humor is sprinkled throughout the book. When discussing the claims of the modern formula companies that their products were close to breastmilk and breastfeeding, the author uses the analogy that “no doubt when escaping a predator, a turtle comes as close as possible to a cheetah in traversing ground: does the comparison tell you anything meaningful about either animal?” (p. 203).

The history of the United States and its association with formula companies is fascinating, and I found several of the observations about mothers who do not breastfeed to be surprising. Comments about “mothers being rewarded for leaving their very young babies in the care of others” may be insensitive to those who see no alternatives (p. 726). The blow is somewhat softened when the author mentions that a working mother may find a way to breastfeed in this environment. There are also comments made about the American breastfeeding effort. Ms. Minchin states that the surgeon-general’s efforts in the 1990s promoting and protecting breastfeeding “pales into insignificance beside the massive structural and cultural support America provides for artificial feeding” (p. 493).

I would recommend the book to those interested in the field of allergy/immunology, the history of breastfeeding, and the use of formula. My only concern is that some of the statements about working mothers or those who choose bottle-feeding can leave the reader discouraged despite the wealth of information the book provides.

Leone L. Waltrous, MD, MPH, FACOG, CLC, graduated from the Howard University Medical School in 1975. She then completed a residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Kings County Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York in 1979. She subsequently rose through the ranks of the Medical Society of the County of Kings, and the Brooklyn Gynecological Society to become president of both organizations. After receiving a Master in Public Health from SUNY-Downstate, Dr. Waltrous decided to become a certified lactation consultant to better help breastfeeding women accomplish their goals. Dr. Waltrous has devoted herself to providing medical care and educating all women, but in particular, those who would ordinarily not be able to avail themselves of such services. Dr. Waltrous has received several citations for her community service, and plans to continue serving the public.