

Review of 'Shiatsu for Midwives' by Suzanne Yates with Tricia Anderson (Books for Midwives) 2003.

'Shiatsu for Midwives' is the most thorough and helpful book on Shiatsu for pregnancy, labour and the early post-natal period I have found. The ideas are both original and tried and tested (if that's not a contradiction in terms), and Suzanne's many years of experience and open way of learning from her students and clients is apparent and supports her text throughout.

In her introduction, she states that she is looking for "a coherent model of shiatsu midwifery care", and that the book covers "examples of safe and effective work". With strong back-up from Tricia Anderson, senior lecturer in midwifery and an independent midwife, the book looks at the nature of Shiatsu (5 elements and TCM), its benefits on maternity care, research, practical techniques for pregnancy, labour and the early post-natal period, and Shiatsu to heal yourself. Like one of those super-mums who's pre-packed a well-stocked bag for her hospital confinement, Suzanne has thought of everything from photos to diagrams to a glossary, to a sample leaflet, and quotes from midwives and mothers. And, it's all presented with full awareness of the safety aspects for all concerned.

Suzanne warns that chapter 3 on Key Concepts may not be of interest to Shiatsu Practitioners, but I found it really interesting and have already used some of the exercises in my classes. In Section 2 the research list is fantastic, providing ample ammunition for the questioning Health Professional on the use of Shiatsu in this field. The boxes with text written by parents and midwives are very easy to read and are positioned well amongst the main body of the text so that the overall flow is really good. The photos are of a high standard and the text, though dense, is clear and well designed. These photos are also shameless, showing clearly how to access points such as CV/GV1, working around a heavily pregnant tummy and things you may not have thought were decent but are in fact helpful in labour!

The absolute strength of this book is its awareness of the fears around working in this area, and reassurance that it's fine to use our human and professional skills: "Although we need to relearn what were once instinctive skills, this should not make us too anxious, in this litigation-driven society, about the safety aspects of using shiatsu. The body gives immediate feedback and no harm can be done if certain common sense guidelines are adhered to." Another strength is that the book contains information acquired through Suzanne's in-depth work, not just theory, and there are subsequently places where she over-rides received information on what to do or not to do: "There are no absolute contra-indications". Personally I trust her completely. She has not only worked in the field for years but has made fantastic contacts such as a Japanese London-based midwife whose mum was a *samba* (traditional Japanese midwife). She certainly backs-up the findings I have gathered from working with mothers and babies.

I lent the book to an experienced (though sceptical) midwife friend and her reaction was, yes, she'd certainly buy the book to supplement a course on

Shiatsu in midwifery, but not otherwise. This isn't surprising as the book does acknowledge what we all know, that it's not possible to learn Shiatsu from a text, even a good and thorough text like this one. But my friend enjoyed the boxes with personal accounts in them, and as she has used other 'Books for Midwives' (same publisher), she can confirm that the book is based on true midwifery practice, reliable and worthwhile. I have no doubt that the existence of this book will add luster to the idea of Shiatsu being integrated into maternity practice.

'Shiatsu for Midwives' is aimed towards Shiatsu Practitioners as well as midwives, and there may be times when you just skip over parts that make pure sense to them but not to us. However, if you are a practitioner who's nervous about safety, this book will both reassure you and give you new ideas, and if you are a parent-to-be and a Shiatsu student or practitioner, it will be vital.

Tamsin Grainger