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History and Assessment: It's All in the Details

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Clinics in Human Lactation series, Hale Publishing, LP, 2008

112 pages, illustrations, shaded boxes, attachments, references, index, softcover, US\$18.95

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This monograph is packed with useful information on how to obtain a detailed and accurate history and assessment of the mother and newborn. The target audience is lactation consultants, dietitians, midwives, and others who assess mothers and newborns. The monograph would be most useful for the new lactation consultant, but some information would be helpful to a seasoned lactation consultant as well, such as notes on cultural foods to increase milk production (p. 36) and a photo and case presentation on vasospasm of the nipple after a feeding (p. 63).

Communication is emphasized, including being aware of cultural background, how to interview a mother using open-ended questions, and working with an interpreter. Attachments with several examples of detailed forms for history and assessment will be useful in clinical practice. The author gives examples of two charting methods, narrative and soap notes. The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale is included along with information on how to determine the score. Permission is given to copy and use this form. The case presentations are among the most interesting and educational sections. They appear in shaded boxes in selected chapters and some include black and white photos.

The assessment of latch (p. 60) describes in detail what should be observed and documented but unfortunately does not include a scoring system. Although a reference list is provided at the end of the book, referencing within the text would be more useful. Small gray boxes with insightful teaching tips appear throughout the book. The Kassing Method for bottle feeding the breastfed baby is included as an attachment and a list of abbreviations is provided at the end of the book. The author includes a short chapter on unique situations, such as multiples, babies in the NICU, adoption, body piercing, and abuse. The reader can find information specifically related to these topics in references and resources, yet La Leche League International's comprehensive breastfeeding website is not listed.

Overall, this compact guide to obtaining a history and assessment is a helpful resource to the lactation consultant.

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