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Self-Help

Why Me? Understanding and Managing a Potential Preterm Pregnancy: A Medical and Emotional Guide

Kelly Whitehead
Vincenzo Berghella, contributor
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Preterm birth is on the rise. In 2008, 12.3 percent of babies in the US were born preterm (before thirty-seven weeks), and the percentage is up from just 9.5 percent twenty-five years ago. The prevalence of preterm birth makes medical guides like *High-Risk Pregnancy—Why Me?* valuable. But the potential emotional trauma of a preterm birth makes Kelly Whitehead's mother-to-mother perspective uniquely powerful.

Whitehead lost her first son at twenty-two weeks and has two children, the results of two more high-risk pregnancies. Her experienced, positive, compassionate voice permeates the book. She's teamed up with renowned perinatologist Vincenzo Berghella to make the book a medial reference, as well as a self-help title. Even more valuable than her experiences and diligent research, are the hope and encouragement Whitehead brings for mothers.

The book focuses on high-risk pregnancies that are likely to result in early delivery, giving readers in-depth information on premature rupture of membranes, preeclampsia, placental abruption, intrauterine growth restriction, incompetent cervix, bacterial vaginosis, and more. It also discusses diagnostic tools and treatments such as tocolytics, cerclages, and transvaginal ultrasonography.

If the words in that last paragraph sound like an overwhelming mess of jargon, have no fear. Whitehead explains everything in a way readers can understand, equipping mothers and families to make choices in challenging times.

The book may focus a little too heavily on incompetent cervix and cerclage—the condition and means of management Whitehead experienced. And while her decidedly frank but friendly voice is a welcome asset to the book, it's jarring at times as she switches between medical and nonmedical terms and approaches.

Mothers will begin this book with fears and questions and will find studies and statistics, real women's voices, and tips like how to find the right doctor and how to help care for your baby in the NICU. It may feel like an overwhelming read—and at times it will be—but for women dealing with high-risk pregnancy (and those who support them), this book will provide the knowledge needed to face the future confidently. Plus, the thorough table of contents makes it easy to locate timely information.

High-Risk Pregnancy—Why Me? tackles a lot of scary, stressful topics, while ultimately giving fuel and reason to a mother's hope and confidence.

Melissa Anne Wuske