

Modified Book Review by Dixie Whetsell, MS, IBCLC 2/09

Making More Milk by Diana West, IBCLC, and Lisa Marasco, MA, IBCLC
Published by McGraw Hill 2009 (available at www.makingmoremilk.com)

Recently, in my role as a hospital lactation consultant, I was asked to talk with Jeanne, a pregnant mother who had requested an LC visit while she was being seen for some outpatient testing. I went to Jeanne's room, and she calmly told me her story as technicians and nurses moved in and out of the room doing her tests. Jeanne was 34 weeks pregnant with her fifth child. She had breastfed all her previous children, however, she never had a full milk supply. She had worked to increase her supply with each baby by pumping, taking some herbs, and using an SNS to supplement at breast. Despite all her efforts, her babies did not gain weight unless she supplemented with formula, and she was never able to pump much milk. She denied any endocrine problems, however, she said that she had never experienced any breast changes during pregnancy or postpartum engorgement. As Jeanne patiently recounted her breastfeeding story, her face showed her disappointment and grief. Her voice was laced with the sadness that comes from feeling you cannot meet your child's most basic needs. Yet, she wanted to know what else she could do to breastfeed this new baby more successfully. For the first time, I was able to encourage her to read a new book called **Making More Milk**, and discuss some herbal remedies that could support good mammary development, and with her doctor's approval, she could consider using during pregnancy. Jeanne did get this new book, and we discussed her options further after her baby girl was born at 39 weeks gestation. During one of my visits with her after delivery, we were looking through this book when we came upon a drawing of breasts like hers, tubular and widely spaced. She pointed, smiled, and exclaimed, "Those look like my breasts! You mean there really might be a reason why I have never made enough milk?!" Jeanne went on to breastfeed her baby girl using an SNS to supplement with formula. She utilized many of the recommendations in the book to support her milk production. The last time I spoke with her this is what she said when I asked her how breastfeeding was going, "I feel more at peace breastfeeding this baby than I ever have before because I realize there is a reason I don't make enough milk." How true this is. Sometimes, knowing there is a reason why, is enough. And, that is what West and Marasco have given us – a book about the reasons why.

I first heard that Diana West and Lisa Marasco were writing a book about the causes of low milk supply a couple of years ago when I heard Lisa speak at a La Leche League conference. After having heard both of them speak, that was enough to make me sign up to purchase it as soon as I could. Between them they have worked with thousands of women with low milk supply, and studied the causes of low milk supply comprehensively. If you are not already familiar with these two, here is a little about each author.

Diana West is an IBCLC in private practice. She is a retired La Leche League leader, creator of the "BFAR" website, and author of **Defining Your Own Success: Breastfeeding After Breast Reduction Surgery** published in 2001. She started the BFAR website for women who were breastfeeding after breast reduction surgery. This web site grew out of an email group that Diana started for mothers with this experience because she was one of them. She then wrote **Defining Your Own Success** to share what she had learned, and to provide a resource for mothers where none existed. Diana has now expanded her web site to include mothers breastfeeding after breast augmentation, and other breast and nipple surgeries. Both

her web site and book continue to be unique resources to families and the lactation community.

Lisa Marasco is an IBCLC, in private practice who also works for the Santa Barbara County WIC program. She has a Master's degree in Human Development with a specialization in Lactation, and has published several articles on lactation. Lisa became interested in Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS) after seeing two mothers with this syndrome who had low milk supply. She then did her Master's thesis on this topic. This began her research into the many possible causes of low milk production. Through her articles and presentations at numerous lactation conferences, she has helped the lactation community expand our knowledge of this topic.

These two accomplished lactation consultants have pooled their knowledge and experience to create a wonderful, family-friendly resource that is also a great tool for any lactation professional. I must confess, however, that I have not read the book from cover to cover. I am afraid I am having too much fun dabbling my way through. And, after much dabbling, here is what I think about this book so far.

First, I would praise these authors for writing this book for mothers. They have used simple, easy to understand language to explain a wide variety of causes of low milk production. This makes this book very accessible to all readers, including professionals, and shows us all that the best explanation for any complex physiological process is the simplest and clearest one.

Second, they have organized the information in the book so that it flows very logically, and one chapter builds upon the last. They do an excellent job of starting with the basics of what is normal for breastfeeding mothers and babies. They have divided the book into sections that each have a specific focus. The first three chapters make up a section entitled "Investigating Your Milk Supply". In this section, the authors walk readers through the basics of breast anatomy, milk production, and how to tell if there is a problem with milk supply. The following sections look at ways to supplement if needed, getting off to a good start with breastfeeding, causes of low milk production, maximizing milk production, coping with low milk supply, and planning for the next breastfeeding experience.

My favorite section is the one on causes of low milk supply because it is organized in such a such an intuitive way that you can almost hear a mother asking these questions. Here are the chapter titles in this section:

Is it something you are doing?
Is it something your baby is doing?
Is it something about your breasts?
Is it your hormones?
Can your mind affect your supply?

In the chapter entitled "Is it your hormones?" the authors touch on all the latest information on endocrine issues and offer more in depth, yet concise, information than you will find in many lactation textbooks. While I am sure they both have even more to say on these topics, the authors show excellent discretion by limiting the information to just enough but not too much. In addition, this information is organized so that you can easily go to a specific section

and read about one topic if that is what you prefer. I have found the index to be very useful when searching for specific topics.

I really appreciate the chapter on galactogogues because they have included food, herbs, and medications. Once you have read that chapter, you are ready for the crown jewel of this book, the Appendix of Galactogogue Tables. The authors utilized a number of different comprehensive sources on herbs, and then categorized the information in an easy to use format. In the first table, herbs are listed alphabetically by name followed by a section on therapeutic doses for different preparations. In the next section of this table, they list other beneficial qualities for each herb. For example, who knew that Caraway Seed is a milk ejection aid, or that Chasteberry regulates the pituitary? I have used this section to help mothers who did not experience normal breast changes find herbs they could safely use to stimulate mammary gland development. The next three sections of this table list potential side effects, cautions/notes, and safety ratings. This rating section combines information from four reputable sources in an easy to read and understand form. Both the Cautions/Notes section and the Rating section provide thorough information on when use of a specific herb is contraindicated. The second table in the Appendix lists symptoms such as hypothyroid, then lists herbal properties and herbs that may be beneficial to each symptom. The last table lists lactogenic homeopathic remedies. As with all herbs and medications, mothers should always consult their health care team. These tables simply make it easier for a mother and her health care team to select remedies that target her medical problems.

I think the most important accomplishment of this book is that it reinforces the need to look more deeply into the reasons why a mother has low milk production. By doing that, we can create a plan of action that comes closer to targeting the cause. For lactation professionals, working with mothers with low milk supply can be an overwhelming challenge that causes us to fall back on the same strategies we have used repeatedly. This book helped me take a fresh look at low milk supply, and begin to ask Why? with renewed energy, and to consider more effective strategies. So, please join me and begin/continue dabbling through this book, and looking for the reasons why.

Dixie Whetsell, MS, IBCLC works as a lactation consultant at a high risk maternal and pediatric hospital. She has been working with breastfeeding families for 17 years.