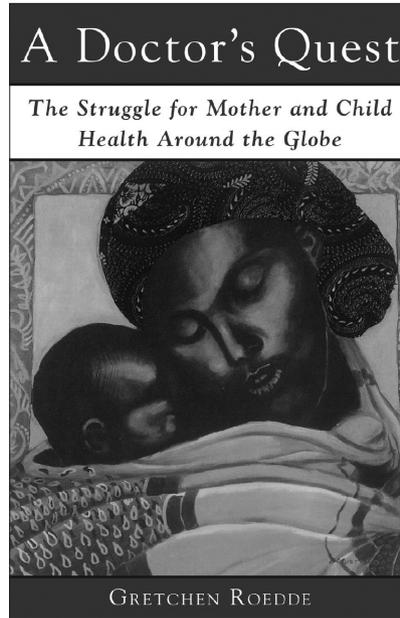


BOOK REVIEW

***A Doctor's Quest: The Struggle for Mother and Child Health Around the Globe.* Gretchen Roedde. 272 pp. Dundurn. 2012. Can\$26.99 (paperback); \$12.99 (e-book). ISBN-13: 978-1459706439**

A Doctor's Quest speaks in the voice of birthing women from the rural regions of 15 of the poorest countries around the world. Their tales of bravery in the face of delivering without trained birth attendants and the joys and the complications that occur are the substance of the book. Weave in the public health perspective on interrelated themes of literacy, contraception, health care delivery, rural health worker shortage, social disruptions, sexual violence, inefficient health care systems and corruption, and the book becomes a compelling treatise on maternal health.

A Doctor's Quest is a tome that is hard to put down, but it is not an easy read. The faces of misogyny, violence, poverty, broken promises and lack of will are ugly ones



that many would prefer not to see. Dr. Gretchen Roedde is not shy about shining a light in those areas she knows all too well.

Roedde, a rural doctor, activist and mother of 2, has spent the last quarter century dividing herself between practising in northern Ontario and evaluating development projects in countries in Africa and Asia. In the rich notes, references and appendices that accompany the narrative, it is

clear that much has been done in that time to reduce maternal and child morbidity and mortality, and it is equally clear that much more must be done.

She doesn't spell out the solutions, although they are there, inferred in the text. Roedde's hope, for literacy programs, for microcredit to improve women's economic conditions, for contraception, for nongovernmental organizations to bypass government corruption, for direct funding to the rural areas that need care the most, for training for birth attendants, for antiretroviral drugs, for funded transport and cesarean, for fistula repair, for the developed world to have the will and the developing world to be able to receive, would seem wildly optimistic and naive if it weren't the work of more than 25 years. The author keeps these hopes alive through her determination and her compassion in the face of social injustice.

Gretchen Roedde and her book are an inspiration.

Peter Hutten-Czapski, MD
Scientific editor, *CJRM*

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