Review of: *Pull Through Blessings: The Colorful Tapestry of Hirschsprung’s Disease*—Lisa Sensenig and Helen Zimmerman

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*Old Order Amish, Michigan churches*

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By Adin Stauffer
Old Order Amish, Michigan churches

Hirschsprung’s Disease (HD) is a genetic condition found in a child born without ganglion cells in part of the intestines. Ganglion cells send signals to intestinal muscles to contract to help pass bowel movements. No signal means no bowel movement, which results in babies not eating, becoming uncomfortable and sleepy, spitting up, and if not treated, eventually dying.

This book begins with a dedication and acknowledgments followed by a list of medical words and their definitions, terms used in this book: barium enema, biopsy, Botox, colon, colostomy, enterocolitis, ganglion cells, ileostomy, ileum, irrigate, jejunostomy, NPO, prolapsed, pull-through surgery, stoma. To the inexperienced reader, most of these terms are probably like a foreign language. For most of the parents sharing experiences compiled for this book, the story of their journey with HD, these terms were also foreign at one time. But shortly after the birth of their child with HD, they were caught up in a swirl of strange terms and happenings never before encountered.

This book presents approximately 35 accounts mostly written by mothers of HD children. It expressed many unique angles of the HD experiences. Yet, there are also several common threads woven through the stories. One common thread is the descriptions of a complicated diagnosis, hospital stays, and surgery, then finally going home again with the challenges of hydration, immunity, and a diet that works, whether through G-tubes, IVs, or simply the right foods to nourish while not flushing too fast through their often much-shortened intestines. “Home again” sometimes meant with a colostomy or an ileostomy, which needed an external pouch for the stool. The stool was often watery and acidic, causing pouches to come off. The surrounding irritated skin needed careful treatment.

Then there were the times the surgeon would do a corrective surgery. The patient’s hopefully successful recovery consisted of caring for incisions, doing dilations (stretching the rectum to stimulate bowel movements), and also some of the same challenges associated with ostomies because the child often had minimal control of his or her bowel movements.

In this book is another common thread, the true passionate love and concern of parents for their children, especially when a child is in pain or distress. Passionate parental love and a drive to learn how to better care for their child kept these country-folk fathers and home-keeping mamas from being completely overwhelmed. In the grueling journey of HD, this sometimes meant handing over their child to the hospital staff and deliberately putting their trust in God as part of living out this love. The strength and endurance each of these parents had can be traced back to a trust in their God, who had, in His infallible wisdom, allowed them to experience this.

One interesting aspect in this book is that most of the authors were still busy mothers at the time of writing. Because of their experiences with HD, they wanted to share their story as a possible en-
encouragement and source of valuable information for others who have gone or are going through similar situations. Most of these writers have not authored any other books or articles and their writing style is not very polished, professional, or eloquent. But the acute reality of the experiences lends a passion to their stories nonetheless.

This book provides thought-provoking and moving reading material for anyone, but the real wealth of information is for people with a genetic family history of HD, people who have encountered HD themselves, or who might encounter it in the future. For me as a reviewer, much of the language, emotions, and experiences that went with HD were familiar because Nathan Stauffer (p. 221) was my younger brother.

Much could be debated about the causes of genetic weaknesses and possible solutions for these disorders, which have developed over generations. Another point of discussion could be if God only allows these disorders or if He created them for purposes of His own. I will refrain from drawing any conclusions on these questions here, encouraging each person to dig for answers for themselves, searching God’s Word and history.

In closing, I would like to point out that in this book, the authors are not pushing an agenda of their own but merely relating the story of their journey as it looked to them. For them, it was, and still is, very real.

Read this book to follow their path of sorrows and joys, disappointments, and progress in the colorful tapestry of Hirschsprung’s Disease.

For order information, contact: Lisa Sensenig, 9705 County Rd. D, Platteville, WI 53818; 608-348-3829.


By: Nathan Shrock, AEMT, EMSI
Midwest Mennonite Fellowship / East Holmes Fire & EMS

This book was written from an Anabaptist perspective geared towards a younger Christian Anabaptist and seems directed at an Amish audience. The book has six different sections relating to various parts of home and farm life. The goal of this book is to encourage the Anabaptist community to use more thought in what risks they take. The sections are as follows: Home and Community, Fire Safety, Farm and Logging Safety, Shop and Construction Safety, Gun/Hunting Safety, and Road Safety. I will be addressing each section individually and giving a summary of my thoughts at the end. Atnip does not specify his reason for writing but addresses some safety items that may not be taught in an Amish home otherwise.

In the introduction, he claims that the Bible is a safety book for spiritual safety but also physical safety. He discusses common sense, pointing out some strange places where we see safety warnings. A sticker on the bar end of a chainsaw that warns not to hold the wrong end seems ridiculous. He then discusses wisdom and foolishness, encouraging the reader to choose wisdom. Throughout the book, he uses true stories about people who suffered from the mistakes that he is writing about as a warning and sometimes poignant reason to heed his advice.

The Home and Community section covers basic things like the hot water heater and how it has the potential to be an explosion hazard. Atnip details how water when heated, turns to steam and expands to fill a room very quickly. He also discusses the dangers of hot water, the dangers of a self-locking cedar chest, and where to keep medications. He then brings up the question of whether accidents