

Debut Novel Tells a New Story about a Little-Known Condition

Supplemental Needs: A Novel, authored by Virginia Isaacs Cover set to release **March 5, 2024**

CHEVY CHASE, MD (November 10, 2023) Ginnie Cover creatively and with great sensitivity shares the story of Rachel and Dave Gold who are thrilled when Rachel becomes pregnant with their second child after months of unsuccessful IVF attempts. They had given up hope they would be able to add to their family.

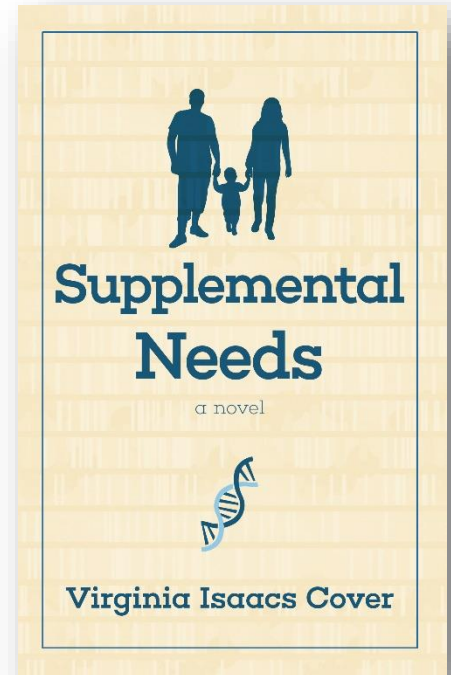
But when Rachel's obstetrician calls to tell her that prenatal testing has revealed that the fetus has a genetic abnormality, they are devastated and frightened. He has an extra X chromosome, a condition known as Klinefelter syndrome. During a counseling appointment following the diagnosis, the geneticist advises that they terminate the pregnancy. He warns of possible behavioral problems, even issues regarding gender identity or sexual orientation. Finding more balanced information, they decide to continue the pregnancy, despite the unknowns.

Although their baby develops normally during the first twelve months, he begins missing milestones. Cover realistically portrays parents grappling with the realization that their child may have special needs and accessing services to minimize any delays. But special needs parenting never exists on its own as the sole stressor in a family's life. At the same time, Rachel and Dave encounter career challenges and confront extended family issues.

Cover is completely familiar with this scenario and the complicated decisions so well laid out in this debut novel. Now retired from a long career in social work focused on children and adults with special healthcare needs, she is also an advocate for those with developmental disabilities, particularly those with X and Y chromosome variations.

"Literature tends to avoid addressing disability, particularly when the character is a child. Writing this novel gave me the opportunity to help change this – to raise awareness and understanding." says author Ginnie Cover.

Supplemental Needs provides a realistic glimpse into the lives of the parents, providing insight, guidance, and empathy. Advance Reader Copies are out now for review, and the author is available for interviews and speaking engagements.



ABOUT THE BOOK

***Supplemental Needs: A Novel* portrays a young family whose lives change on learning through prenatal genetic diagnosis that their baby will have Klinefelter syndrome, most likely causing some degree of disability, as well as infertility and possible sexuality issues.**

Rachel and her husband are delighted with a pregnancy following years of infertility. But their joy is shattered learning that their baby boy has an extra X chromosome. They need to decide quickly about continuing the pregnancy. Genetic counseling cannot predict how his life will proceed because the range of functioning for this diagnosis extends from barely affected to significant intellectual disability. A geneticist advises them to have an abortion. Nonetheless, the Golds continue the pregnancy, anticipating a mostly normal childhood for their son, with possible developmental delays. Jacob's development begins to depart from the typical after his first birthday, and by the age of two, Rachel and Dave are navigating the world of special needs parents. At the same time, Rachel is engulfed in a career crisis, and Dave's brother confronts increasing challenges to his commitment to Orthodox Judaism. The novel deftly addresses disability and genetic diagnosis, sexuality, and family dynamics.

TOPICS GINNIE CAN SPEAK ABOUT:

- Klinefelter syndrome and other X and Y chromosome variations
- Challenges and strategies for special needs parenting
- Prenatal counseling
- Societal acceptance and impact on parents and children in special needs community
- Jewish community and LGBTQ issues raised by this story

Supplemental Needs: A Novel

by Virginia Isaacs Cover | Bold Story Press

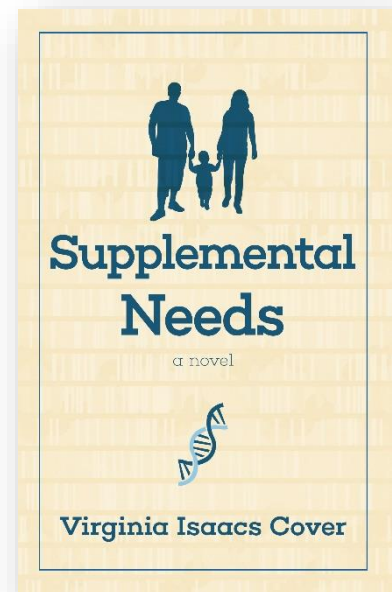
Pub date: March 5, 2024

Category: Fiction, featuring character with disability

Paperback: 978-1-954805-52-1 | 5" x 8"; 356 pages; \$16.99

Ebook: 978-1-954805-53-8 \$9.99

Available through: Ingram



Net proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to advocacy organizations for X and Y chromosome variations.

“Ginnie Cover shines a light on modern parenting. With prenatal testing becoming widespread, a book featuring a family receiving a diagnosis of a chromosomal difference is long overdue. The journey does not end with the birth of a child, it is just beginning. From early intervention to supplemental needs trusts, you’ll walk with the Gold family and be glad you did.”

– **Carol Meerschaert**, Former Executive Director, AXYS (genetic.org)

“This is a richly textured, moving novel about a mother’s journey after her son, Jacob, is prenatally diagnosed with Klinefelter syndrome, also known as 47,XXY chromosomal variation. Through learning what this diagnosis means for Jacob, Rachel discovers more about herself and the world around her than she ever thought possible in a way that is sure to inspire. This story will resonate with anyone who has a loved one with Klinefelter’s or who has a family.”

– **Liz Hills**, D.O., Family Practice

“If you have never heard of X and Y Chromosome variations, welcome to the world's most common unheard of medical condition that impacts 1 in 500 individuals. Life is never how you expect it, and Ginnie Cover shows us that the world does not end when things do not go as planned. Life challenges make you smarter and stronger in ways that you could never imagine. Cheers to Ginnie for recognizing that chromosomal variations exist, celebrating our uniqueness, and cherishing the things that matter most in life.”

– **Carrie R.**

“I was very impressed by the way the author educated us about Klinefelter syndrome, while portraying a loving and supportive family and extended family dealing with real life issues. The description of the parents' emotions, decision-making, and their own education was especially good and - importantly - educates readers. The wrap-up at the end of the book was excellent. The workplace shenanigans were amusing and all too true to life. This was a fast read that kept me engaged all the way through. “

– **Marge Ort**



Author of
Supplemental Needs: A Novel

VirginiaCover.com



SHORT BOOK BIO

Virginia (Ginnie) Isaacs Cover, a native of Minnesota, holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan and works with children and adults with developmental disabilities. In 2012, she published a widely read guidebook for those affected by X and Y chromosome variations, *Living with Klinefelter Syndrome, Trisomy X, and 47,XYY*. *Supplemental Needs: A Novel* is her first work of fiction.

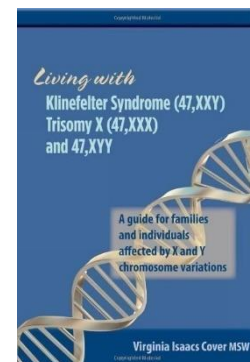
LONG BOOK BIO

Virginia (Ginnie) Isaacs Cover grew up in Minnesota. She holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan and has worked throughout her career with children and adults with complex medical conditions and developmental disabilities. She is an advocate for those with disabilities and their families, and published a widely read guidebook for those affected by X and Y chromosome variations, *Living with Klinefelter Syndrome, Trisomy X, and 47,XYY*. Turning to fiction, she explores the impact of a prenatal diagnosis on a young family in *Supplemental Needs: A Novel*. Cover and her husband live in the Washington, DC, metro area.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Living with Klinefelter Syndrome, Trisomy X and 47,XYY: A Guide, Freisens, 2012; available in English, Spanish, Dutch and Korean

The book provides clear explanations of the genetics involved, as well as diagnosis, disclosure, development from infancy through, potential health and fertility issues, and educational and psycho-social considerations.



Meet Ginnie Cover

Speaker | Advocate | Author



I grew up in Minnesota, attending the University of Minnesota as an undergraduate, and earning a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan. I worked throughout my career with children and adults with complex medical conditions and developmental disabilities. I also became a “special needs parent” when my younger son was diagnosed prenatally with 47,XXY, also known as Klinefelter syndrome. So, I became a passionate advocate for families affected by disabilities, including the X and Y chromosome variations, as well as providing educational programs for families and for professionals who work with this population.

In 2012, I published *Living with Klinefelter Syndrome, Trisomy X, and 47,XYY*, a widely read guidebook to X and Y chromosome variations. This guidebook has helped thousands of people grow their understanding of this condition, but I believe it is equally important for literature to cover the emotional impact that prenatal testing has on parents while also improving early identification of X and Y chromosome conditions. This could only be done through the sharing of stories, so I turned to writing fiction. Developing my skills in coursework at the Writers Center in Bethesda, Maryland, I completed *Supplemental Needs* during The Novel Year, a twelve-month workshop, that took place early in the Covid pandemic. My goal in writing the novel was to explore the impact of a prenatal genetic diagnosis on a young family who decide to continue a pregnancy despite a medical geneticist’s advice.

As far as I know, there has never been a novel about prenatal diagnosis of sex chromosome aneuploidy (SCA). The only pieces of fiction covering Klinefelter syndrome and 47,XYY have centered on criminal behavior, a stigmatizing myth that leads families to hide SCAs. I have set out to change this.

My husband and I live in the Washington, D.C., metro area with our Yorkshire Terrier, Cooper. We have two adult sons and three grandchildren. In addition to writing, I volunteer through my synagogue for the Interfaith Refugee Support group. I also serve as a board member for L’Arche Long Island, a non-profit agency providing housing for adults with developmental disabilities as well as vocational and life skills training. My interests include family activities, travel, quilting, writing, and electing responsible and representative public officials.

1. Why is this story so important to you?

I wish there had been this kind of novel when I was faced with these same questions, decisions, and consequences. I looked, there was nothing. After raising our son, I decided to write the story I needed to hear in the hope that I can support another family dealing with the same situation.

2. Why was it important to explore Klinefelter syndrome and its various challenges as a fictional story?

When I started this project, I gave thought to writing a memoir, but I simply could not imagine being public about my son's diagnosis given the stigma surrounding it. He was several years out of high school, and living on his own, but still struggling with being able to work successfully enough to support himself. I also did not think I could write honestly about my own emotions following the prenatal diagnosis, or the wrenching experience of having a young child being found to be months behind in development. It was far easier exploring these issues at a distance with a fictional mother and family.

Literature tends to avoid addressing disability, particularly when the character is a child. Writing this as a novel gave me the opportunity to change this.

3. What do you hope readers learn from your book?

Supplemental Needs incorporates accurate information and creates needed conversation around what we each believe about continuing a pregnancy where there may be some level of disability, or when there may be a slightly elevated rate of homosexuality, or of gender dysphoria. Readers gain greater awareness and understanding about the parental experience of when a child is not following a typical developmental trajectory, familiarizing the public with sex chromosome aneuploidy (SCA's) in a non-sensational manner.

Bottom line? I want readers to experience the sadness, fear, and hopefulness felt by Rachel and Dave as they wrestle with the choices that must be made, and the impact they have on their son, and their family. Through the characters and events, readers will also confront the research suggesting that sexual orientation and identity may be heavily influenced by DNA.

4. What is being illustrated by including differing levels of observance of Judaism within Rachel and Dave's families?

The level of religious observance influences attitudes toward sexuality, regardless of denomination. The more conservative, the less accepting of LGBTQ identities. It was important to provide readers with a religious

perspective so *Supplemental Needs*, attempts to deal with varying levels of conservatism and observance. Dave's brother Ben and Ben's partner, Eli, took years to reconcile their sexual orientation with Orthodox Judaism. Ben's mother, a Modern Orthodox woman, is far more accepting than Eli's parents, Hasidic ultra-Orthodox Jews, from whom he is estranged. Star, the conservative Catholic mother, is fearful of exposing her son to men who are open about being gay. Dave and Rachel are typical Reform Jews who long ago accepted LGBTQ individuals.

The setting of the novel begins in 2002. This was years before Obergefell vs. Hodges, the Supreme Court decision establishing the right to same-sex marriage. In the twenty years since the initial setting of the novel, there has been an extraordinary change in attitudes toward homosexuality and acceptance of these relationships by more "mainstream" congregations, whether Jewish or Christian.

5. Why have Klinefelter syndrome (KS) and other sex chromosome variations received so little publicity?

The signs may be subtle and vary greatly from one individual to another. Low muscle tone, speech delay in young children, learning disabilities, ADHD, shyness, poor coordination, or slight body disproportions can all look much like other common diagnoses. Many healthcare professionals still think that a genetic syndrome must be accompanied by dysmorphic facial and other features, but individuals with SCA do not look "syndromy." Although SCA is more common than Down syndrome at an estimated 1 in 400 live births, it is recognized and properly diagnosed in fewer than 25 percent of the affected population.

Also, the early publicity in the 1970s, primarily for Klinefelter syndrome and 47,XYY, was almost uniformly negative. Based on several biased screening surveys, conducted only in penal and psychiatric institutions, researchers concluded and published articles stating that these tall men were predisposed to aggression and criminal sexual behavior, including pedophilia. Because the institutionalized population was also characterized by low intelligence and intellectual disability, these individuals were also thought to be mentally retarded, even though less than 10 percent of the SCA population has an IQ of less than 70. Although several researchers later concluded there was no valid data supporting the conclusions, the damage was done.

Additional topics to explore with Ginnie:

- Prenatal counseling
- Termination of pregnancy when chromosomal variations exist
- Societal acceptance of KS, the neurodiverse, LGBTQ individuals and how it has changed over time
- Attitudes in Judaism toward LGBTQ individuals and why these are so different across the branches (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox)