



# BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW



## PEER REVIEW IN GENERAL PRACTICE

*R. Grol, P. Mesker and F.G. Schellevis (eds)*

*Translation by J.W. Krabshuis and K. Williams*

*Department of General Practice, Nijmegen University, The Netherlands (1988)*

*230 pages. Price 50.00 Dutch florins or \$26.00*

While we have talked a great deal about peer review in the UK in recent years, general practitioners in other countries have actually been doing it, as this book shows. It is the collected experiences of a team from the Nijmegen University Department of General Practice who have been running a large scale experiment in peer review since 1982. It is intended as a source of advice for doctors who wish to undertake peer review in small groups, and in this respect is ahead of any similar reports from the UK. It includes perceptive hints on running an audit group successfully and how to negotiate agreed standards that will be adhered to. The consultation is dissected and comprehensive criteria and checklists provided, together with 24 clinical protocols in a detailed but flexible format.

The book achieves its aim of being a guide to peer review in group settings, and can be firmly recommended to anyone running such a group. However, it should be noted that the definitions of criteria and standards are confused, and that there is little discussion of video-recording since audio taping and sitting-in seem to be the preferred Dutch methods for observing consultations.

R.H. BAKER

*Research Fellow, General Practice Unit, University of Bristol*

## A NEW KIND OF DOCTOR

*The general practitioner's part in the health of the community*

*Julian Tudor Hart*

*Merlin Press, London (1988)*

*362 pages. Price £12.95*

Reviewing Dr Tudor Hart's new book is without doubt the most difficult and most important exercise of this kind that I have ever undertaken. Whatever your response to this review I urge you to buy, borrow or steal a copy and read it for yourself.

*A new kind of doctor* is two things: it is a critique of medicine, particularly medicine in the United Kingdom, which also aspires to offer a solution for present failings. The critique is trenchant, beautifully and arrestingly written, full of quotable aphorisms and different from previous attempts by others.

The new solution, the 'new kind of doctor', is based upon two major premises. The first is that the case for proactive, anticipatory care, which includes opportunistic screening, is almost

self-evidently true. The second is that doctors should be accountable to their patients and that the unit of accountability should be the small community which approximates to an individual or group practice population of patients. It will not escape you that this solution closely relates to a professional lifetime spent in Glyncoirwg and to an overt political conviction. I believe both premises to be unsustainable and dangerous.

There is no attempt in this book to deal with the problems, both practical and ethical, which surround opportunistic screening and other 'proactive' activities. In particular there is little discussion about the problems of false positives and low predictive power except in relation to hypertension. As one might expect there is a lot of sensible discussion about blood pressure although I wonder if somebody who has been encouraged to make 28 recordings of their own blood pressure can be readily reassured that there is no cause for concern.

I fear that the 'new doctor' working in his or her community may become, together with others, the nidus for a new intolerance based upon medicine as a morality. I would rather that the general practitioner of the future retreated into being reactive and responded to patients's requests in a way which was, in Dr Tudor Hart's own words, based on 'measured doubt'. This lays me open to belonging to the liberal critique which Dr Tudor Hart describes as having, 'scholarly backing, humane intentions, appeal to both left and right intellectual radicals without embarrassment to either, and ability to interpret defeat as victory'. I am suspicious of Utopias of both the left and the right and believe that realism must set more modest goals and that life in Utopia threatens individual freedom.

Although he does not hold a full time university appointment Julian Tudor Hart is the most distinguished of present day academic general practitioners. This book illustrates some aspects of his extraordinary achievement; it is full of treasures. Read it.

JAMES MCCORMICK

*Professor of Community Health, University of Dublin*

## LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

*The experience of patients and their families*

*Robert Anderson and Michael Bury (eds)*

*Unwin Hyman, London (1988)*

*265 pages. Price £9.95 (paperback), £28.00 (hardback)*

The individual, his or her family and the collective experience of chronic illness is the focus of this book. Studies are presented which, through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, clearly describe the wide ranging social effects of chronic illness.