

as 'a new and original effort at interdisciplinary communication' may have failed because it tries to be all things to all disciplines. I regret I cannot recommend it to general practitioners.

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### NURSING A PROBLEM

*Lesley Mackay*  
*Open University Press, Milton Keynes (1989)*  
*200 pages. Price £25.00 h/b, £9.95 p/b*

This book concerns the problems of nurses working in the National Health Service and should be of interest to all health professionals. The author, a sociologist, obtained the views of over 700 nurses, working in a variety of settings, in one health authority area. Self-completion questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the information.

Respondents' quotes are used liberally and, at the end of each chapter, the author draws her conclusions. Unfortunately, we are not told how the nurses or the quotes were selected, how the study was introduced or what questions or comments generated the answers. There can be no doubt that the author has been successful in highlighting some key problems within nursing, such as constraints, frustrations, constant changes, thwarted idealism and lack of tolerance. However, her approach seemed to invite reports of problems and difficulties and if there were any sources of satisfaction, they did not stand much chance of being included.

The author makes no unjustified claims of generalizability and states clearly that the picture she describes is her own view. With that important proviso, her report deserves attention.

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### ON-CALL

*Out-of-hours telephone calls and home visits*  
*J.D.E. Knox*  
*Oxford University Press (1989)*  
*66 pages. Price £5.95*

The series *Practical guides for general practice* has covered a variety of subjects including screening, immunization and several clinical topics. It also includes the best book yet written on practice computing. This latest monograph pulls together most of the literature on out-of-hours primary care and should be essential reading for vocational trainees and aspiring practice managers. It will serve as a valuable reference book for anyone with more than a passing interest in the organization of primary care.

The way in which general practitioners deal with out-of-hours responsibilities is an emotive subject and in *On-call* both the patients' and the doctors' needs and rights are viewed in an objective and non-partisan manner. There must always be a compromise between availability and accessibility and Professor Knox treads a wise and wary path. He makes the assumption that British general practitioners prefer the continuity of their own practices to the services of independent deputizing agencies, yet fully recognizes the problems and constraints imposed by modern city life.

This book is full of practical information on different telephone systems and on the organization and documentation of out-of-hours work. Interpersonal aspects are well covered, including the importance of intermediaries between patient and doctor, and patients' views and needs are carefully considered. What equipment to take to an out-of-hours call is discussed, as are the occasions when doctors might decide that taking any equipment could put themselves at unacceptable risk. Mention of the need for a police escort comes as a shock to this reviewer in his rural enclave.

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### FAMILIES, SERVICES AND CONFUSION IN OLD AGE

*Enid Leven, Ian Sinclair and Peter Gorbach*  
*Avebury, Hants (1989)*  
*328 pages. Price £29.50*

The somewhat clumsy title of this book at least describes its remit. The authors are concerned to draw attention to the impact on carers and the health and social services of the progressive dependency produced by dementia and this they have certainly done. They describe a survey they have conducted and review the literature and all the problems involved with dementia in a thorough manner. This conscientiousness, however, is not without cost for it leads the authors to give seemingly endless examples to illustrate every point, which makes for turgid reading in some parts. These examples are sometimes thumbnail sketches of family problems and sometimes quotations. The situations described are all too familiar to any member of the public and constant repetition seems pointless. Most chapters, however, end with a summary of the main points and these are excellent. The chapters on services are first class and the conclusions should be required reading for all doctors, especially in the light of recent reports of some carers not getting the support to which they are entitled in the community.

This is a book for the practice library, as a source of reference and to help with teaching.

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### UNDERSTANDING HAEMOPHILIA

*A personal account and practical guide for parents, teachers and the caring professions*  
*Marie Berger*  
*Ashgrove Press, Bath (1989)*  
*143 pages. Price £4.95*

To be told that your child has a serious incurable condition is devastating for any parent. When the disorder is also genetically determined, there is the added fear for the health of other children in the family, their children, and any future pregnancies. While expecting her fourth baby Marie Berger learnt that her third child had haemophilia and then that his elder sister also had the condition.

Her book confronts the emotional turmoil of such a situation. She explains in simple language the facts about haemophilia and dispels the fallacies and misconceptions that abound. There is practical advice about dealing with problems as they arise without letting them dominate people's lives.