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# BOOK REVIEWS

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## GOING TO SEE THE DOCTOR

Cerry Stimson and Barbara Webb

Routledge & Kegan Paul  
London (1975)

152 pages. Price £4.95

It has taken me a long time to realize the extent to which I have underestimated my patients' resentment and even hatred, and I have overestimated their gratitude and love. The barriers which separate doctors and patients have prevented doctors from discovering the truth about patients' perceptions of the consultation.

*Going to see the Doctor*, which is based upon a study of a sample of women who are patients of practices in South Wales, makes an important contribution to our understanding. It would certainly be rash to generalize from such a small and essentially biased sample. Nevertheless, no practitioner could read this account without feeling that the perceptions of these patients are unlikely to be unusual and may be extremely widespread.

It makes abundantly clear the extent to which patients are at a disadvantage in controlling the consultation to achieve their objectives.

The book is easy to read and free from jargon. It deserves wide readership, especially of practising doctors and those training for a career in general practice.

J. S. MCCORMICK

## SOCIOLOGY IN MEDICINE

R. K. Jones and P. A. Jones

Hodder & Stoughton Educational  
Kent (1976)

222 pages. Price £4.50

This small book is thoroughly recommended for undergraduates, vocational trainees, and practising doctors. Sociology is perceived by students as somewhat peripheral to their major interests, therefore such a text must be brief, easy to read, and relatively cheap.

*Sociology in Medicine*, written as part of a Modern Nursing Series, achieves all these objectives. It succeeds in being both comprehensive and succinct. It is clearly written, reduces necessary jargon to a simple level, and displays a lively sense of humour. A short quo-

## Medical sociology — some suggested reading

*We have recently received requests from readers to compare and contrast books on a particular topic of relevance to general practitioners. The following is the first such review and comments on it will be welcomed. Editor.*

There are three textbooks which should be considered as a suitable introduction to the subject.

The best known is probably Morris's *The Uses of Epidemiology* (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1975) which is a classic, formal study of the science using predominantly medical examples.

In 1971 we suggested in this *Journal* that *Sociology in Medicine* by M. W. Susser and W. Watson (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) was the "best book on medical sociology that we know". Its second edition deals systematically with culture, class, and the cycle of family development. The chapter on medicine and bureaucracy should be read by any doctor involved in the organization of health services.

The most recent general textbook is David Tuckett's *An Introduction to Medical Sociology* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1976) which can be regarded as an alternative to Susser and Watson. It covers much the same ground in a less formal and somewhat sharper style, and can be equally recommended.

For those who are interested in an analysis of pressure groups and in the behaviour of the medical profession's own union, Harry Eckstein's *Pressure Group Politics—the Case of the British Medical Association* (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1960) provides interesting evidence of the need of governments to relate to a representative organization of the medical profession.

W. J. Reader's *Professional Men* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) is a simple and readable history of the evolution of the profession, with special reference to medical practice.

Ann Cartwright is one of the best known medical sociologists in this country and her *Patients and their*

tation may illustrate these strengths: "By stigmas Goffman does not mean simply a physical blemish such as scars, deformities and so on. Prostitutes, homosexuals and dustmen have stigmas to a larger or lesser degree. But a person can have a scar, for example, which can

*Doctors—a Study of General Practice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967) was one of the first works to illuminate general practice from the outside. Although the data in this book are becoming out of date, it is a good introduction to the subject.

Her later book, written with Karen Dunnell, *Medicine Takers, Prescribers and Hoarders* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), is essential reading. The remarkable findings of the extent of self-medication gives great food for thought.

Relatively little has been published about *Complaints against Doctors* (London: Charles Knight, 1973) so Rudolf Klein's study in professional accountability, which was previously reviewed in this *Journal* (1974), is well worth reading, if only to discover that the complaints system is not in itself likely to be a potent force for raising the standards of care.

The Medical Sociology Research Centre of Swansea has developed a world-wide reputation for useful contributions to medical sociology, and David Robinson's *The Process of Becoming Ill* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) is a classic of its kind. Although there is much unnecessary jargon, the ideas are of fundamental importance to the understanding of the sick role.

These ten books are not necessarily the best or most important contributions of medical sociology to general practice. They have, however, illuminated some of the sociological aspects of my work in general practice.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

## References

- Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* (1971). 21, 744-745.  
Norell, J. S. (1974). *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, 24, 541-542.

be interpreted as something positive (he gained it in the war)."

The text is well furnished with references and provides an excellent springboard for those who wish to pursue matters further.

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