

OVERSEAS DOCTORS IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

David J. Smith

Heinemann Educational Books
London (1980)

307 pages. Price £12.50

David Smith, a Senior Research Fellow at the Policy Studies Institute, has made a particular study of racial problems in the UK. This book is the report of one such study financed by the DHSS, which concerns "working hospital doctors" and unrestricted general practitioner principals in the NHS in England.

The study surveyed the opinions of a randomly selected sample of doctors in the NHS who qualified overseas. The design included doctors with UK qualifications, to make comparison easier. The doctors were interviewed by a commercial market research organization. British and overseas-qualified doctors in various grades, including consultants and administrative staff at nine hospitals (two of which were teaching hospitals), were also interviewed. The hospitals were not selected randomly.

The researchers have garnered a great quantity of data about career intentions and the extent to which they were fulfilled, qualifications, experience, and attitudes. In the final chapter the author examines the data from the perspective of overseas doctors and the NHS "to consider whether there is a relationship in which overseas doctors tend to be exploited, and whether there are policies which would prevent any such exploitation while also, if at all possible, improving training programmes, methods of organization and standards of care in the NHS."

The author has identified some inequalities in comparison with UK graduates. These are due mainly to difficulties in putting together a training programme, for it is to gain experience and additional qualifications that most non-anglophone migrants come to England, to lack of contacts and lack of understanding of the system of practice and training, and to linguistic problems. He mentions particularly the career guidance which UK graduates receive from their teachers, who know them well, and which overseas graduates miss because they arrive as strangers. He suggests that specific, rotating training programmes, at junior, middle and senior level, with stated entry requirements should be created to overcome this problem.

So far as general practice is concerned, David Smith found that overseas graduates entered general practice at a later age than UK graduates and

more often because they had failed to achieve their goal of a specialist career (seven per cent of UK-qualified general practitioners would prefer to be hospital doctors compared with 30 per cent of overseas graduates). They were also more likely to be members of smaller partnerships, situated in less desirable areas, and to have more patients, a larger proportion of whom would be coloured. The workload of overseas graduates appeared to be similar to that of UK graduates, but overseas doctors were found to work longer hours (69.5 hours per week compared with 61.8 hours per week).

In general, the book provides interesting and useful information, of value to those concerned with postgraduate education, which bears out much of what might be termed consensual experience: that the standard of training of overseas doctors at the time of entry to the UK is variable, and that language often causes difficulty and compounds the problem of obtaining suitable training posts. It also points out that the overseas graduates who tend to return to their country of origin are those who overcome these difficulties and achieve the experience and qualifications that they set out to obtain.

H. W. K. ACHESON

HOSPITAL IN-PATIENT ENQUIRY 1976

Department of Health and Social Security Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Welsh Office

HMSO
London (1980)

331 pages. Price £8.75

At first sight, the *Hospital In-Patient Enquiry* for 1976 does not immediately appear relevant to general practice, but on examining the tables it is clear that many of the activities in hospitals do reflect attitudes among general practitioners, especially referral policies.

The hospital inpatient activity analysis is based on a 10 per cent sample of patients in hospital beds in England and Wales, and is useful because admissions are classified both by age group and year of admission during the last 10 years.

For many conditions there is little change from year to year, but some of those in which general practitioner decision taking is most involved show striking trends.

For example, there has been a considerable fall of almost a half from the

157,800 patients admitted for hypertrophy of the tonsils and adenoids in 1967 to the 82,810 in 1976. Similarly, admissions for appendicitis have fallen from 111,300 in the earlier year to 80,400 in 1976. It looks as if two of the commoner operations of childhood have been substantially reduced in frequency during the last 10 years.

It would have been interesting to analyse the trends for dilatation and curettage separately, but unfortunately these are included with other conditions which make it difficult to separate subgroups. There has been an almost 50 per cent increase in the number of "sterilization without mention of illness" between 1973 and 1976, and despite the considerable pressure from psycho-geriatricians on general practitioners not to use the term 'senility' the number of patients diagnosed in hospitals with the label of 'senility' without mention of psychosis has risen steadily from 5,500 in 1967 to 8,610, 10 years later.

Finally, I was intrigued to know of the number of "persons without current complaint or sickness" in hospitals, and even more puzzled to find that they have almost doubled in number between 1973 and 1976.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

HUMAN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Philip Feldman and Malcolm MacCulloch

John Wiley & Sons
Chichester (1980)

226 pages. Price £12.50

"The Royal Commission on Medical Education in the UK . . . found that British medical schools offered little or no instruction about sexual behaviour and sexual problems. Another study . . . found that although only one third of the doctors surveyed had received instruction in contraceptive techniques, more than 90 per cent offered contraceptive advice to their patients."

This extract—taken from chapter one of Feldman and MacCulloch's new book—makes it fairly clear that one of their main objectives in writing it was to provide a useful and sensible volume which would give the general practitioner basic, and yet the most up-to-date, information about sexual behaviour and psychosexual medicine. To a considerable extent they have succeeded. Yet because their book is also intended for psychologists, social workers and "all those in the helping professions concerned with sex therapy", it is inevitable that some of the anatomical and physiological material contained in this volume is too simple to