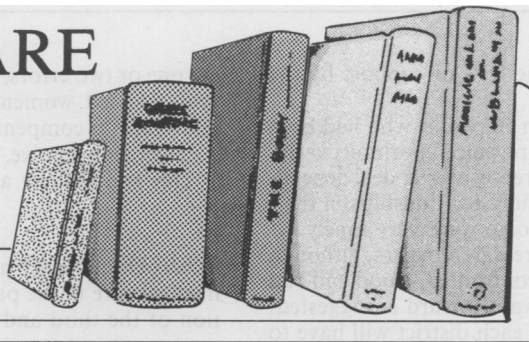


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF



GORDON LLOYD
RAPHAEL CANTOR
WENDY J. JONES

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

With people with mental handicaps, their families and friends

Ann Shearer

Oxford University Press for the King Edward's Hospital Fund (1986)
231 pages. Price £9.50

MAKING THE BREAK

A. Richardson and J. Ritchie

King Edward's Hospital Fund, London (1986)
80 pages. Price £3.00

RE-ASSESSING COMMUNITY CARE

N. Malin (Ed)

Croom Helm, London (1986)
354 pages. Price £22.50

CARING FOR DYING PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITHS

The Lisa Sainsbury Foundation Series

Julia Neuberger

Austin Cornish, London (1987)
57 pages. Price £2.50

CHILDREN WITH CANCER

A comprehensive guide for parents

Jeanne Munn Bracken

Oxford University Press (1986)
407 pages. Price £20.00

DEMENTIA AND MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE OLD

A practical guide: understanding the problems

E. Murphy

Papermac, London (1987)
189 pages. Price £4.95

EXPLORATIONS IN QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

Volume 1. The definition of quality and approaches to its assessment.

Volume 2. The criteria and standards of quality. Volume 3. The methods and findings of quality assessment and monitoring

Avedis Donabedian

Health Administration Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Volume 1 1980, Volume 2 1982, Volume 3 1985)

Volume 1 163 pages, Volume 2 504 pages, Volume 3 528 pages. Total price \$82.95

Normalization and care in the community for the mentally handicapped have in many areas proved difficult to achieve. Social services departments have many competing claims on their resources and the aspirations of their clients remain sadly under fulfilled.

Ann Shearer's book, *Building community: with people with mental handicaps, their families and friends*, sets out to describe what can be done. The depth of research is impressive, the references most helpful. The chapters tackle one thorny problem after another in a most positive manner. Excellent examples are given of ways in which families can be helped to a fuller life through local support groups.

The chapter on education gives examples of how the integration of mentally handicapped children can be achieved within normal schools. The problems of local authority training cen-

tres are discussed in depth and their shortcomings exposed, but examples of good practice are quoted.

The author deals perceptively with the slow move away from hospital care for the mentally handicapped and the way in which plans for alternative accommodation are gradually emerging in response to local needs.

This book explores and explains the present system of care and is at the same time full of positive ideas on the way to facilitate improvements.

MARTIN BARKER

'Families need help in taking the first step in asking about the nature of provision available to their [mentally handicapped] sons or daughters when they eventually move from the parental home. Feelings of guilt and betrayal, of "putting them away" make this a highly charged situation. Some do not know even where to begin to ask, having had little attention from a social worker or any other official person. But more commonly, they are reluctant to ask and want to be asked and encouraged to investigate what is available. They need to know that they will not be judged adversely for asking about available provision and that their difficulties in doing so are at least part understood.'

Making the break is really a research paper full of fascinating statistics, excellent references and many thoughtful and sympathetic comments. The basis of the paper is a study in two local authority districts of families with a mentally handicapped member. Interviews with parents surveyed their views on what provision they would like to see available to their sons and daughters. Unfortunately, a sizeable gap was revealed between what was wanted and what was available.

When the break finally came most parents suffered a bereavement-type reaction, partly due to their own sense of loss but more often because of other people's inability to discuss the situation. As general practitioners we should be aware of this. This is a useful book for all those interested in the welfare of the mentally handicapped and their families.

MARTIN BARKER

Re-assessing community care is aimed at students of social work, nursing and health studies. It comprises a series of papers, 14 in all, on various aspects of community care. Unfortunately, common ground is covered in the preamble to many of the chapters. A little editing would have made for easier reading. Despite this criticism the book is full of interesting material.

The description of the commissioning of the new Dr Barnardo's intensive care support unit for the severely mentally handicapped makes fascinating reading. The residents there are being given superb care in a positive and homely environment. This pilot development shows what can be done, but presents no cheap alternative to the present hospital provision.

The other side of the coin is demonstrated by the inclusion of the diary of a landlady who looked after four mentally handicapped people in a small house next to her own family home. This account shows just how difficult it is to provide adequate

care in this setting and highlights the lack of support by the local community services.

In another chapter, interviews with 50 people who had been discharged from a long-stay hospital revealed enormous variation in the quality of their lives. Apparently a great deal depended on how well they established friendly relationships in their new environment. Some did well. Some were very lonely.

No answers are provided by these research papers, although the problems of community care are confronted. Good and bad practice are described but no clear way forward is suggested. If any consensus is reached it is that each district will have to develop a wide range of facilities for the mentally handicapped and mentally ill giving careful attention to the wishes of the patients and their carers.

MARTIN BARKER

In our rapidly-changing society there can be few doctors who are not called upon to care for patients of religious faiths apparently greatly different from their own. What can they eat and drink? What do they believe about the importance of this life and the possibility of a life after death? What upsets them, what medical and nursing practices may offend and how best can we care with both respect and sympathy?

Written by a London rabbi in the simplest terms, making it a refreshing little reference book, *Caring for dying people of different faiths* explains all we need to know about Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. The message is clear — be sensitive and humble enough to ask patients about their faith and its practice but, before that, buy this book and keep it near at hand.

DEREK DOYLE

Children with cancer: a comprehensive guide for parents is written by the mother of a child who has been successfully treated for cancer. Half of the book consists of a well researched account of the malignancies of childhood and their treatment. There is a long section which consists of a list of cancer agencies throughout the world but which is dominated by those in the United States of America. Finally, there is a clear account of the most important tests for cancer and a glossary of medical terms.

The highlight of the book is the section on coping with the illness as it affects all members of the family. Here the author provides sound practical advice on day to day problems and a helpful account of the emotional stresses which may arise. At the end of this section is a short chapter on death and bereavement.

This book would certainly be valuable reading for the parents of children with cancer but the reader is constantly reminded that this is very much an American book and the price may deter many of those who would benefit from the book.

ROGER BURNE

Those caring for dependent old people, especially old people with mental disturbances, are a neglected group. With politicians calling for increased community care the result is that a greater burden of day to day domiciliary care has to be borne by relatives, neighbours and friends without a corresponding increase in supporting resources. As a result carers often feel deprived of the sympathy, attention and help to which they are entitled from society in general and government in particular. It is even difficult for carers to find out what resources are available to help them.

Dementia and mental illness in the old meets the needs of these carers and can be strongly recommended to them and their family doctors. It is well written, comprehensive and down to earth, giving excellent advice on such issues as the need to avoid the resentful feeling that the old person could be doing more for himself, the need to safeguard against neglect of the rest of the family and the importance of role maintenance. The book is also an excellent source of references, although inevitably there

are one or two errors, for example, following a court ruling last year married women are now entitled to claim invalid care allowance to compensate for loss of earnings when caring for a dependent relative.

This is definitely a book for the health centre library.

A.J. TULLOCH

Avedis Donabedian has been the leading thinker on quality in medical care in the past two decades, and so with the publication of the third and final volume of *Explorations in quality assessment and monitoring* a review is appropriate. I must declare at the outset my own bias, having spent last summer in Ann Arbor under his tutelage gaining a great respect for him and his writings. However, one of the lessons Donabedian conveys is the importance of critical thought and I will seek to emulate his example in this review.

In the first of the three volumes, *The definition of quality and approaches to its assessment*, the definition is shown to depend on who is making the judgement — doctors imagine a perfect medical outcome, patients require care tailored to them as individuals, and society wants limited resources distributed efficiently. Donabedian favours an amalgamation of these three. This argument is extended by a comparison of the views of patients with those of providers, and it transpires that although the two have much in common, they place different values on the interpersonal aspects of care. Finally, the familiar structure of process and outcome is introduced in a chapter that includes an important discussion of the relationship between process and outcome and the relative value of each in quality assessment, a question which has confused many in the past. Anyone contemplating the difficulties of outcome assessment should study this section.

Volume two considers the criteria and standards used in quality assessment, topics which have received much attention in North America where there is a tradition of large scale audits based on record review. The British reader may find the debate less important, particularly as the argument in *The criteria and standards of quality* is sometimes complex and demands careful reading. Nevertheless, there are valuable insights into the relative merits of implicit and explicit criteria, the derivation of criteria and their stringency.

The final volume of the series, *The methods and findings of quality assessment and monitoring*, is a review of a large number of studies by other workers. Aspects of quality assessment such as the definition of quality, or the assessment of process or outcome are illustrated by the critical examination of published research. Findings are displayed in several hundred graphs, histograms and other diagrams, and each is accompanied by a discussion. The drawings are a masterly example of how to convey information graphically, and the associated comments are highly astute. It adds up to a review of the achievements of research into quality, and a statement of the problems to be confronted, which may be summarized in three questions: What is the distribution of quality? What makes quality of care so variable? How can deficient quality be improved?

These are not books for every doctor's library. Most of us do not have a special interest in the measurement of quality, and so would not wish to study the complex and intricate work these books contain. However, for those who relish this quest, *Explorations in quality assessment and monitoring* is more than essential reading, it is the core work on the subject. The style is personal and the deft use of language almost unique in the dry world of medical writing. It will be read many years after the content becomes outdated, because the writing is so clear and delightful, and because it demonstrates that meticulous thought is as important in medicine and research as technological skills and study techniques; indeed, Donabedian's logical thinking is a lesson in quality in itself.

R.H. BAKER