

The cover looked good, and I expected to enjoy the chapter on general practice and to be informed and entertained by the others. However, this is not an easy book to read, and I was irritated by the sociological jargon and the way that the argument that women are marginalized in these professions because of their 'deviant gender status' is based on assertion and reference rather than data which I could assess for myself.

The chapter entitled 'Gender and general practice' is based on interviews with single-handed women general practitioners in Birmingham, where women make up only 8% of general practitioners but 20% of single-handed practitioners (nationally, the proportion of women general practitioners is 18%). The reasons these women gave for choosing to practice in this way included, predictably, previous personality or financial clashes in group practices, a desire for independence, and a praiseworthy enthusiasm for continuity of care. It is argued that this was somehow indicative of the 'ghettoism' women experience in group practice: a view I would be reluctant to accept without considering the opinions of men in single-handed practice, women in group practice, or the world outside Birmingham.

The final chapter on the position of professional women in India was a refreshing change, and for me the only enjoyable chapter in a book which I can only recommend as a source of copious references.

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MEDICINE AND THE BIBLE

Bernard Palmer (Ed)
The Paternoster Press, Exeter (1986)
272 pages. Price £7.95

Medicine and the Bible is a book of nine essays, seven of which are written by medically qualified people. The topics covered are medicine in the Old Testament world and medicine in the New Testament world, followed by the Levitical code, leprosy and the Bible, the value of human life, homosexuality, demon possession, healing and conscience in 'modern medicine'.

Old Testament laws are shown to have had a profound impact on promoting healthy life-styles in the ancient world and Christianity to have had powerful influences over the development of western medicine and nursing practices. For these reasons the nine essays are of relevance to historians, moral philosophers, biblical scholars and any person in the caring professions who is concerned about the decisions they now face in daily clinical work. The authors have provided a well referenced book which applies biblical precepts to the confused social climate of the 1980s and they lead the reader in a systematic and logical way to link our ancient past to the most pressing moral and ethical issues of today.

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PRACTICAL PSYCHIATRY OF OLD AGE

John Wattis and Michael Church
Croom Helm, London (1986)
195 pages. Price £8.95

This introductory text presents the subject of psychogeriatrics to 'intelligent people of all professions'. It describes multi-disciplinary team work, using a problem-oriented approach and is written by a psychiatrist and a clinical psychologist.

Although it is good to have a new introductory text for people entering the field, I have some reservations about the style

and presentation of the book. First, the two authors have not adequately described the tasks of other members of the multi-disciplinary team, such as social workers and occupational therapists. Secondly, the chapter on 'confusion', covering two of the principal syndromes of psychogeriatrics — delirium and dementia, is very scanty whereas a whole chapter has been devoted to the subject of hypochondriasis. Thirdly, although the problem-oriented approach and behavioural methods are well described, some of the other sections do not simplify complex subjects so successfully. For example, the section on depression is a little confusing, partly because the authors are trying to oversimplify complicated and inconclusive psychiatric research. Fourthly, although there are plenty of diagrams the authors have followed the trend of the times in relying excessively on flow charts.

Despite these reservations I would recommend the book as a good introduction to the subject. The problem-oriented approach is particularly appropriate to primary care management of elderly mentally ill patients and offers a much more positive style of working than has been employed in the past. If the balance of the book were a little better and some parts a little clearer, it would be first rate.

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PSYCHIATRY IN MEDICAL PRACTICE

David Goldberg, Sidney Benjamin and Francis Creed
Tavistock Publications, London (1986)
322 pages. Price £12.95

Psychiatry in medical practice was written for medical students but would also be a worthwhile purchase for a health centre library. It is well presented, thoughtfully written and encourages the whole-person management of a patient rather than perpetuating the division between physical and psychological problems.

I particularly liked the chapters on interview techniques, worth reading for revision at any level of experience, and on aetiology, emphasizing the multifactorial nature in psychiatry. Health visitors may welcome the section on disorders peculiar to stages of the human life cycle.

It is difficult to criticize this book but I could not find any mention of the Court of Protection or of the enduring power of attorney. In addition, advice on the management of sleep disturbance without immediate recourse to hypnotic drugs seems to have been omitted and the index is not extensive perhaps because the book is designed to be read through.

It will not fit into a pocket but is not too heavy to be accommodated in a briefcase or large handbag. Only time will show whether the binding is strong enough to stand up to the frequent use this book deserves.

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PARTNERS IN CARE

The consultation in general practice
Peter G. Livesey
William Heinemann, London (1986)
128 pages. Price £7.50

Partners in care describes various aspects of the consultation in logical order, including chapters entitled Expectations,