



COMMUNITY NURSING

Research and recent developments

*G. Baker, J.M. Bevan, L. McDonnell and B. Wall
Croom Helm, London (1987)
310 pages. Price £10.95*

Four researchers based at the Health Services Research Unit, University of Kent, have produced this unique volume which brings together documentation relevant to the development of community nursing from 1974 to 1986. The work was funded by the Department of Health and Social Security and its main purpose was to identify, describe and assess schemes involving developments in community nursing services. An extensive survey of the literature including 25 relevant medical and nursing journals and a specially designed questionnaire sent to chief nursing officers in England are the main sources of information. DHSS and professional reports are carefully summarized; but regrettably Scottish Home and Health Department reports are not included.

The chapter on evaluative research is an intriguing analysis of relevant research using criteria which include type of author and location, size and design of study. The implicit assumption that a large study must be better is open to question. Also, the authors seem to equate quantitative with objective and elevate the randomized controlled trial to a position of unquestionable superiority in research design — both debatable points.

Priorities for future research are identified and a structured approach to the creation of a data base with wider dissemination of good ideas and practices is recommended.

This book will be a welcome windfall for researchers in the field and should be of interest to teachers in community care topics, especially general practitioners and community nursing lecturers, to administrators and to policy makers.

LISBETH HOCKEY

*Freelance Lecturer in Community Nursing and Research
Methodology, Edinburgh*

MEDICINE AND LABOUR

The politics of a profession

Steve Watkins

*Lawrence and Wishart, London (1987)
272 pages. Price £6.95*

I am not sure who will read this book on the political workings of the medical profession; Dr Watkins indicates in his introduction that he is directing it at the labour movement in its widest sense.

He endeavours to explain the medical profession and its institutions, widely regarded as a bastion of the right wing, as a depoliticized body of professional people, which, owing to the historical solidarity of the profession, appears monolithic but is actually much more complex.

As a participant in many of the events which he uses to illustrate the role of the British Medical Association in political activities over the past few years I enjoyed reading most of the chapters and seeing these events through the author's Medical Practitioners Union oriented eyes. However, in the chapters on industry and medicine, and politics and public health I found myself bogged down in a plethora of words and ideas. In the latter chapter he seemed to be speaking as a community physician about the internal relationships between branches of the profession in a way which could confuse rather than enlighten an outsider.

He develops well the theme that the depoliticization of medicine has actually made it more powerful in political circles and the examples he gives of the BMA's scientific opposition to nuclear war and its fight against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in support of confidentiality are interestingly and accurately described. His analysis of the profession's political stance, and of its left wing element in particular, is penetrating and illuminating. He points out that the latter has failed in the past because it has been more political than professional and has not heard and heeded the voice of the profession at large.

As a bridge building exercise between the medical profession, as embodied in the BMA, and the labour movement this is a positive effort to show the left wing that they do not lose their political identity by becoming part of the establishment but can benefit their cause where there is common interest. This is not surprising as Steve Watkins is himself a committed member of the Medical Practitioners Union and BMA Council. Whether the book will be read by those at the other end of the political spectrum I do not know, but I certainly commend it to them.

JANE RICHARDS

General Practitioner, Exeter

MILD HYPERTENSION: IS THERE PRESSURE TO TREAT?

*W.E. Miall and Gillian Greenberg
Cambridge University Press (1987)
222 pages. Price £25.00*

Now that the results of the Medical Research Council's Working Party on Mild to Moderate Hypertension have been so widely published in the medical and lay press, I was surprised at first that there was anything to write a book about. But there was, and it makes fascinating, if not always easy, reading.

The trial was a prodigious effort — 12 years in the making, costing £4 million and covering 17 300 people from 179 practices. In 12 short chapters Drs Miall and Greenberg cover the treatment and outcome of hypertension in the patients studied, compare the results with those of other trials and discuss the

ethical problems. They describe with refreshing candour the mistakes and omissions. Their tentative conclusions and suggestions are very relevant to general practice.

I believe one of the most important and unexpected outcomes of this trial will be the initiation of the practice nurse, which will have a profound effect on the delivery of primary care.

This is an important book — it should be the basis of hypertension screening and treatment in general practice and as such should be mandatory reading for all those in primary care.

D.W. GAU

General Practitioner, Beaconsfield, Bucks

UNEMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH

A disaster and a challenge

Richard Smith

Oxford University Press (1987)

197 pages. Price £4.95

This is an important, excellently written book on a subject affecting the work of us all and on which none are so well informed that they will not learn a great deal more from Dr Smith. It is based on his series of articles in the *British Medical Journal*, but at £4.95 even doctors who kept them should buy this book and re-read them. Questions derived from the data should be included in the qualifying and MRCGP examinations.

Since 1967 all general practitioners have had two whole-time-equivalent jobs in their gift. The fact that of about 60 000 reimbursable posts we have chosen to fill only 34 500 while we still complain that we do not have enough time to do our work well, indicates that as a group we are wrongly motivated and poorly informed. This book tackles both these problems excellently, with a good balance between anecdotal experience and statistical research.

Richard Smith faces opposition from two groups. On the one hand there are many who deny that unemployment is of particular concern to doctors as doctors and regret the *British Medical Journal's* policy of including social issues in its remit. On the other hand there are those like myself who deny that further research is needed to prove that an event which reduces income by half for about 60% of those made unemployed must affect mental and physical health, and are generally impatient with approaches that seem to evade macro-judgements by concentrating on micro-investigations and micro-solutions. It is really not possible to satisfy both these audiences.

Dr Smith, 'though not frightened' of controversial macropolitics, has chosen 'to say little and step lightly'. So lightly that the political consequences of major social change are not faced seriously, but this does not matter. Dr Smith provides so much excellent, thoroughly referenced, source material that no health worker seriously concerned with the direction taken by society in the past 10 years can afford not to have this book.

JULIAN TUDOR HART

General Practitioner, Glyncorrwg, West Glamorgan

OXFORD HANDBOOK OF CLINICAL SPECIALITIES

J.A.B. Collier and J.M. Longmore

Oxford University Press (1987)

789 pages. Price £9.95

Any book which attempts to deal with general practice in 64 pages, half of which are blank, has to be admired for audacity if nothing else. The book also deals with gynaecology, obstetrics, paediatrics, psychiatry, ophthalmology, ENT, dermatology, orthopaedics and trauma and is a companion volume to the *Ox-*

ford handbook of clinical medicine. It is described as being written primarily for those taking up their first responsibilities in the major specialties of clinical medicine.

I have to admit to approaching the reading of this book in a hostile frame of mind but found the succinct treatment of the different clinical specialties to be both witty and informative. I anticipate that this book will be found in the pockets of the white coats of many medical students and residents. It will be of particular value to those young doctors who do not gain experience in general practice. This book is a classic of its kind in showing that brevity does not necessarily lead to superficiality.

E. GRAHAM BUCKLEY

Editor of the Journal

THERAPEUTIC FACTORS IN GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

Sidney Block and Eric Crouch

Oxford University Press (1987)

342 pages. Price £8.95

Small group work has become the hallmark of general practice education and is now firmly established as the model of choice. However, in our clinical work we are still firmly wedded to individualized care. Working with patients in small groups is an avenue very few general practitioners have explored. For this reason this excellent book may not receive the attention it deserves.

The authors have assembled an impressive array of research data and highlight those 'factors' that lead to a positive outcome in group work. A helpful differentiation between 'techniques' used in small group work is a useful reminder of their limitations. Chapters outlining the importance of insight, self-disclosure catharsis, guidance acceptance and the instillation of hope are particularly relevant to anyone seriously involved in group therapeutic work. However, much if not all the work relates to clinical and not educational groups and the application may not always be apparent. The boundary between training and treatment is one which at some stage all those interested in the training of health professionals will have to explore. This particular book provides an authoritative introduction.

PATRICK C. PIETRONI

*Senior Lecturer in General Practice,
St Mary's Hospital Medical School*

CHIROPODISTS DON'T JUST TREAT FEET — THEY TREAT PEOPLE (Video)

Society of Chiropractors, London (1987)

Price £10.00

This 20 minute video is a well-produced presentation which briefly describes the training, professional accreditation and modern practice of properly qualified chiropractors.

Today the chiropractor should be seen as an integral member of the primary health care team. Care of the feet no longer focuses on repairing the ravages of many years of neglect but starts with health education and prevention in children, young adults and the middle aged. Chiropractors look at the whole person before deciding on their recommended course of action.

Unfortunately the video's brevity is both a strength and a weakness. Its production lacks a clear objective since it would be equally appropriate to show it to other members of the primary health care team, prospective chiropractors or patients themselves. Each audience would have something to learn but no one group would be fully satisfied by the content of the film.

CLIVE FROGGATT

General Practitioner, Cheltenham