

Clearly illustrated is the potentially devastating impact of chronic illness upon families and especially the spouse, an aspect of illness that has frequently been ignored in the past. Also highlighted are the severe constraints that practical needs can have upon both individuals and families, thereby reminding us of the many ways in which illnesses can debilitate. The development of coping strategies is also discussed. The problems and possibilities for improvements in service provision are mentioned but not developed, leaving largely unstated the potential for services to help adjustment.

Although based around a sociological framework the book remains readable to those outside medical sociology. Overall it successfully shifts the emphasis away from the medical towards the personal and wider social aspects of chronic illness. It is an interesting and frequently enlightening book that can be highly recommended to those within the medical profession, particularly for the insight it gives into the social effects of selected chronic illnesses.

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YEAR BOOK OF FAMILY PRACTICE 1988

R.E. Rakel, R.F. Avant, C.E. Driscoll, J.G. Pritchard and C.W. Smith (eds)

Yearbook Medical Publishers, Illinois (1988)
587 pages. Price £34.00

On the face of it, this book would make a nice Christmas present. It is about the same size as a box of chocolates although it costs as much as two bottles of malt whisky. It is beautifully produced, has an excellent index and is packed with information, but unfortunately has little to do with family practice. It turns out to be a collection of many hundreds of annotated abstracts of papers dealing mostly with internal medicine, published up to July 1987. The shortest chapter in the book is the one dealing with family problems.

Despite this, it is a browser's paradise; the dedicated after-dinner reader will turn up such gems as a list of 12 indications for empiric amphotericin B, a useful review of the evaluation and treatment of smell dysfunction and a cautionary account of black widow spider envenomation.

This is all the more peculiar when the reader discovers, leafing back to the title page, that all the editors head departments of family practice and primary care in the USA. This book cannot be recommended for the practice library, but as a source of stimulation and edification it is likely to compare favourably with other compendia of useless information published for the festive season.

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MANUAL OF COMMUNITY PAEDIATRICS

Leon Polnay (ed)

Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh (1988)
222 pages. Price £9.95

This book was written to complement *Community paediatrics* which is a useful textbook in a field which is still short of good material. *Manual of community paediatrics* is intended as a guide to good clinical practice, and is written in note form, which

makes it easy to refer to quickly. The index, although short, is adequate.

The early chapters, which concentrate on child health surveillance and children with special needs, are good and provide helpful information about the materials required and developmental milestones. There are, however, several unsatisfactory aspects of the long chapter on clinical problems: in the section on fits no mention is made of the management of the condition; otitis media is not covered, while the common cold and roseola infantum receive half a page each; verrucae and warts are discussed twice, and appear to merit much more attention than epiglottitis, one of the most feared acute emergencies in clinical practice.

This manual is aimed at new doctors in community practice, health visitors, school nurses and general practitioners, and it is disappointing that there are no general practitioners among the contributors. The book has valuable features for the general practitioner, but it could not be used as a guide to many of the clinical problems in general practice.

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LOCATION AND STIGMA

Contemporary perspectives on mental health and mental health care

Christopher J. Smith and John A. Giggs
Unwin Hyman Press, London (1988)
309 pages. Price £35.00

This collection of original papers takes as its theme the major influence of location as a social factor influencing mental morbidity. This application of geography to urban management policy is discussed within the constraints imposed by prevailing resistance, stigma. Using demographic data, the studies concentrate on the possible links between general aspects of the environment and mental illness, for example unemployment, economic deprivation, state planning and urban housing. Then, mapping major mental disease markers such as suicide, alcoholism, accidents and psychosis from hospital data demonstrates pockets of high density contained in well defined areas within inner cities and remote rural areas. This encourages further study into these areas to demonstrate the importance of environmental and genetic factors.

The studies on stigma discuss the implications of discharging patients into the community and the current trend for community care rather than institutionalization. They indicate that a common factor in reducing stigma for mentally ill patients in the community is provision of small scale dwelling houses kept in good external repair which blend into the neighbourhood rather than large impersonal hostels.

Geography, distance, transportation and provision of community amenities have a major impact on clinical decision making, cost effective patient care and community attitudes to mental health. Patients judge the quality of the service offered as much by externals such as the fabric of the building and its presence in their neighbourhood as by the professional qualities of the doctors within.

This book challenges us to think beyond the everyday concerns of identification and treatment of mental disease and disease which are probably the leading causes of disability in most developed countries today.

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