

a poorly organized practice and many of the problems that this might raise. It covers the factual knowledge required to deal with the new legislation and then proceeds to consider effective communication, motivation and teamwork. Another section, covering 'managing systems', gives a comprehensive account of automation and modern office equipment. It then tackles the area of quality and how one measures it, including examples of practice activity analysis, audit and the annual report. The remainder of this section deals with managing money, reading accounts and income generation under the new contract.

Finally, the book covers the most important part of any practice — the patients themselves. It acknowledges that patients have become better informed in recent years, and that they are entitled to know how their practice operates and what services it can provide.

Although it is a detailed and comprehensive source of information the book is easy to read, has a good range of references and a useful index. The authors' breadth of knowledge will be a great asset not only to practice staff, but to all employers looking for more efficient and effective practice management.

MOLLIE MCBRIDE

General practitioner, Chester

ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN CANCER CARE

Basil A Stoll (ed)

Macmillan Press, London (1989)

134 pages. Price £25.00

Ethical dilemmas in palliative medicine have become more complex with advances in medical technology. This excellent collection of articles covers the main areas of controversy.

Breaking bad news is difficult, and the patient's right to information and the cost of deception are discussed as is the problem of determining what is 'appropriate' treatment for a cancer patient. The piece on the compromise between quantity and quality of life is particularly enjoyable and emphasizes that supportive care is not a 'soft option'. Caring for patients without using aggressive chemotherapy may result in a better quality of life for them and their family but this option can be more demanding on the doctor, both clinically and emotionally. Professor Spreeuwenberg from Amsterdam adds an interesting view to the euthanasia debate with his outline of the Dutch Medical Association's guidelines for euthanasia. The second half of the book is concerned with the health professional and society, containing a piece by a nurse which provides a useful insight into some of the ethical dilemmas which can arise within multidisciplinary teams.

Ethical issues are of increasing importance in cancer care and this book is a concise and comprehensive introduction to the dilemmas facing doctors and nurses. Ethical problems demand debate and this collection of views is a stimulating contribution.

DAVID JEFFREY

General practitioner, Evesham, Worcestershire

THE NHS UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Philip Strong and Jane Robinson

Open University Press, Milton Keynes (1990)

192 pages. Price £9.99

In this book the authors explore the emergence of 'general management' within the National Health Service. This new style of management was introduced in 1984, emerging out of an in-

quiry headed by Sir Roy Griffiths of Sainsbury's. The results of these changes were, and continue to be, revolutionary as the style of management changed from one of administration based upon consensus decision making between NHS management and the 'clinical trades', to that of an individualized, performance driven style in which the general manager has the ultimate say. Indeed, the pay and continuing employment of the new managers themselves are related to their performance. The origins of this management style are to be found in the industrial and commercial sectors and the authors quite rightly explore its appropriateness to the NHS.

The book reports verbatim the words of clinicians and managers that support the authors' arguments. This is considerably different from an empirical study, but nevertheless is effective in conveying insight into general management and its impact upon the health service.

There is a sense throughout the book of, if not outright antagonism, then at least a certain distaste for general management. This leads one to the feeling that the authors would prefer a return to the traditional consensus approach in which the clinical trades are dominant in determining the deployment of services and resources — a preference some readers of this review might well support, bearing in mind the recent advent of clinical directors within hospitals.

Ought this book to appear on the shelf of every practice library? Probably not. However, for anyone interested in how the NHS is currently run (and I would certainly include trainees in this category), it is a study well worth dipping into — particularly as family practitioner committees have now come under the auspices of general management.

C J ATKINSON

*Fellow in health service management,
Health Services Management Unit, Liverpool*

CHOOSING FOR CHILDREN

Priscilla Alderson

Oxford University Press (1990)

241 pages. Price £6.99

The subtitle for this book asks simply 'How can parents be involved in decisions about high-risk medical treatment?' This turns out to be a question that leads one to a trail of increasingly intriguing dilemmas and debates about the whole nature of consent for medical procedures.

I found it absolutely fascinating. The book, and the research that it is based on, not only look at the life and death decisions of major cardiac surgery, but also at the everyday consent that is required for minor procedures. Much of it is a sad indictment of the patronizing and unhelpful attitudes that so many of us show towards parents and patients, yet in other parts of the book the kindness of members of the medical and nursing staff comes shining through.

The most interesting section, however, deals with the way in which doctors help patients make decisions. It questions how the clear-cut highly specific data we may have on aspects such as pulse pressures or breathlessness can be balanced with the patient's subjective feelings and fears, and other non-specific data. It is an area that all doctors should consider. The book is both highly stimulating and well written, and any doctor who helps patients and parents to make decisions would be well advised to read it.

DAVID HASLAM

General practitioner, Ramsey, Cambridgeshire