



### **HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE**

*Cicely Saunders (ed)*

*Hodder and Stoughton, Kent (1990)*

*120 pages. Price £8.95*

This short paperback is a welcome addition to other work written by the St Christopher's Hospice team. After many years of experience in palliative care they are in a good position to describe plainly and honestly some of the tensions that arise among staff members in caring for terminally ill people. The lessons to be learnt from this, particularly those described in Tom West's chapter, should be applicable to anybody working in any interdisciplinary setting, be it hospital or general practice, as well as those in a hospice.

The chapter by Linda Jackson on the difficulties for the ward sister in managing her staff is a clear account of team leadership and should give confidence to anyone wishing to instigate a change in nursing patterns.

The chapters on care of the motor neurone disease patient and the role of the chaplain initially seemed weaker, but no less valid in the contribution they make to the global picture of the stresses and strains of caring for extremely ill patients. This book is good value for a simple paperback. I have already given it to two senior nurses to read. This sort of literature can enhance the workings of an interdisciplinary team and should be read by anyone working across professional boundaries.

ILORA FINLAY

*Consultant medical director, Holme Tower Marie Curie Centre, South Glamorgan*

### **THE GREENING OF MEDICINE**

*Patrick Pietroni*

*Gollancz, London (1990)*

*227 pages. Price £14.95*

I suspect that this book was written with a lay audience in mind but I enjoyed the opening section, which is a review of the origins of green medicine. In the second part of the book Dr Pietroni outlines the problems of medical care in the twentieth century, opening with the now familiar arguments on over-prescribing. I was pleased that he did recognize that this was not all the fault of the doctor; patients who demand miracle cures must share some of the blame. In subsequent chapters he identifies problems connected with man's health and his misuse of the environment: air and water pollution, chloro-fluorocarbons and ozone depletion, sick-building syndrome, nuclear radiation hazards and so on. The information given makes persuasive reading. The final section of the book deals with possible solu-

tions and highlights new approaches to dealing with causes of ill health such as cancer and mental illness.

It was a pity that throughout the book Dr Pietroni felt it necessary to highlight the shortcomings of the medical profession and denigrate the work which is being done in today's National Health Service. I suppose that is what politics is about — to make one's position look better than that of the establishment. It certainly does not advance the cause of the green movement to make such remarks as 'doctors would be happier to study disease than to actually treat patients', nor does it seem helpful to describe treatments for cancer such as surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy as 'aggressively masculine' while psychotherapy, mental imagery and dietary intervention are given as examples of the 'gentler more feminine approach'. I was hoping to read about Dr Pietroni's work in the Marylebone health centre, but unfortunately only a short account is included in the last chapter. Perhaps more information will be forthcoming as this experiment in health care progresses.

MARTIN BARKER

*General practitioner, Stamford*

### **THE CHILD SURVEILLANCE HANDBOOK**

*D M B Hall, P Hill, D Elliman*

*Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford (1990)*

*257 pages. Price £14.95*

Child surveillance no longer involves a list of pass-fail tests picking up a few conditions which will usually be found anyway, but is now a more flexible routine with emphasis on the specific needs of children at a particular age and in a particular setting.

This handbook provides frontline workers with a logical and practical information base when caring for children aged under five years and their families. It not only gives good advice on the early detection and management of problems, secondary prevention and the routine of child health surveillance, but also emphasizes primary prevention and health promotion. It encourages a team approach among professionals and the family, emphasizing the parents' role as the principle witness of normal and abnormal development and as agents for change.

*The child surveillance handbook* covers problem solving as well as screening. The most common concerns are dealt with in the most detail. Fashionable fads are mentioned critically, immunization routines are clarified and emotional as well as sexual and physical abuse is recognized. The frequent behavioural difficulties of toddlers and older children are particularly well covered, offering solutions with insight.

The importance of clear and accurate records are mentioned but the needs for standardization and that the records should

be suitable for audit are not emphasized. If child health surveillance is worth doing, it should be done well and be seen to be done well from within and outside practice.

That aside this book is essential for any practice which is committed to good child health as well as the care of childhood illness. It is a timely publication and should obviate the need for publishers to reprint other older texts yet again.

JOHN E HANDLEY

*General practitioner, Livingston, West Lothian*

**THE FORGOTTEN PEOPLE**

**Carers in three minority ethnic communities in Southwark**

*Joy Ann McCalman*

*Kings Fund Centre, London (1990)*

*80 pages. Price £4.45*

This short book describes a study of carers among three ethnic minority groups in Southwark: afro-caribbean, asian and vietnamese/chinese. The community care bill makes this study useful reading for anyone involved with black or other ethnic minority groups. We all know that many white carers are not getting the help they need in terms of finance, support, respite and information. It is therefore hardly surprising that poverty, isolation and exhaustion are revealed among the ethnic minority groups studied. For a variety of reasons, carers in ethnic minority groups are not benefiting from the services which are available. Language barriers and direct discrimination result in the under provision of housing, heating, respite/holidays and other services for these carers.

*The forgotten people* makes specific recommendations for different caring services, including primary care. It encourages the provision of more information and more accessible services; better understanding of carers' needs; employment of black and other ethnic minority staff in surgeries; and the use of interpreting/advocacy services. These recommendations are

applicable to all primary health care teams working with ethnic minorities.

KATY GARDNER

*General practitioner, Toxteth, Liverpool*

**CHILD PSYCHIATRY AND THE LAW**

*Dora Black, Stephen Wolkind and Jean Harris Hendriks (eds)*

*Royal College of Psychiatrists, London (1989)*

*178 pages. Price £10.00*

This book is primarily written for child psychiatrists and paediatricians, and gives clear guidance on the preparation of reports for court proceedings covering the welfare of children. Though written from a medical standpoint, much of the information is highly relevant to other professionals involved in child care legislation such as social workers and court welfare officers. The text is clear and concise and the book is a most useful reference for professionals in the medico-legal field.

By virtue of their often intimate knowledge of family relationships and the health of family members over a prolonged period, general practitioners can provide vital information about children in their homes or foster homes and about other family members. This fact appears to have been overlooked by the authors who do not include the general practitioner on the list of people who might be contacted by the person preparing a report on a child for the court. It is less common for general practitioners to advise the court directly but when such an occasion does arise they would be well advised to read this book beforehand.

Child legislation is complex and this book should be available in local postgraduate centre libraries. Individual general practitioners are unlikely to need it sufficiently often for it to be a worthwhile purchase, though larger group practices might find it useful.

ANGELA DOUGLAS

*General practitioner, Woodbury, Exeter*

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For further information please write to Professor E. Idris Williams, Department of General Practice, The Medical School, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham NG7 2UH. Telephone (0602) 709395.