



HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE IN LATER LIFE

Christina Victor

Open University Press, Milton Keynes (1991)

182 pages. Price £10.99

This book represents a valuable contribution to the increasing amount of high quality literature on gerontology in the United Kingdom. It has two broad aims: to consider the health status of elderly people and to consider their use of health and social services. Christina Victor has achieved an impressively detailed and authoritative text.

It does not, however, make for bedtime reading and it would be unrealistic to expect all general practitioners to include it in their libraries. But, given the policy and resource implications of current demographic trends, if general practitioners are to continue to make their important contribution to the care of elderly people in the UK, it is essential that those who represent general practice at local and national levels understand the key issues and controversies. *Health and health care in later life* will provide a comprehensive briefing as we await the impact of recent health service reforms and the implementation of the community care legislation. The author ends by expressing concern that the changes will put at risk the universal and equitable provision of care and thus will affect the health of elderly people. This concern will be even more justified if general practice and primary care services are expected to carry the practical consequences of inadequate community care budgets.

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CLEARING THE AIR: A GUIDE FOR ACTION ON TOBACCO

M Raw, P White, A McNeill

British Medical Association and World Health Organization, London (1990)

151 pages. Price £6.95

This book is a collection of case studies — engaging, readable and challenging readers to make their own contribution to the campaign against smoking. Its central theme is the realization that proving the dangers of smoking has not been enough to persuade governments to take effective action against tobacco promotion.

It reports on efforts made in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to discourage smoking. For example, one chapter describes 'The big kill', a series of booklets by the British Medical

Association and Health Education Council, which highlighted the death toll from tobacco in each part of the country and achieved considerable local coverage. In Manchester and elsewhere, Smoke Buster clubs have shown that they can catch children's imagination and establish non-smoking as the norm. The Australians contributed a popular campaign using graffiti to illegally 'improve' posters on Sydney billboards.

The book succeeds in relating these activities to attempts to legislate against tobacco promotion and it highlights the vital importance of winning public support. A good example of this is the 1987 tobacco act in the Australian state of Victoria, which both restricted advertising and raised tobacco taxes to fund a health promotion foundation, with powers to sponsor sport and the arts.

Inevitably, much of the book preaches to the converted, but the authors sometimes ignore the arguments put forward by the tobacco companies when it might have been useful to address them. For example, the recent media campaign against the proposed European Community ban on cigarette advertising shows how the tobacco industry attempts to portray restrictions on advertising as a ban on free speech and the rights of smokers. It would have been helpful if the book had presented the evidence for an association between tobacco advertising and cigarette consumption. Similarly, the absence of a report on work in the developing world is disappointing.

Clearing the air: a guide for action on tobacco provides a number of useful ideas and it would be invaluable to anyone coordinating a campaign against tobacco promotion. It does not address the role of general practitioners in helping individuals stop smoking, but it does show the part we can play in winning public support for campaigns against tobacco promotion.

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CHALLENGING CANCER: FROM CHAOS TO CONTROL

Nira Kfir and Maurice Slevin

Routledge, London (1991)

135 pages. Price £8.99

Challenging Cancer: from chaos to control may prove to be all things to all readers; how the contents will be received will largely be determined by the background and experience of the individual reader.

There are three main sections: the first deals with such topics as the characteristics of the 'cancer crisis', the importance of