



## 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.

C FREER

*General practitioner, Glasgow*

## 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.

JONATHAN GRAFFY

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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

information — quality, quantity and delivery, and an interesting discussion of support. The central section comprises verbatim reports grouped under a series of headings, such as 'control', 'being alone' and 'living with advanced cancer'. These reports come from weekend seminars given by the authors for cancer sufferers and their significant others. The final pages describe the illness and background of Dr Vicky Clement-Jones, who had cancer and who was looked after by Dr Slevin. The description of her treatment and her reaction to her condition provide a fascinating insight into the effect on all involved.

To quote the authors, 'this book is for people that know about cancer, either personally or professionally'. It contains much that is challenging, and readers may well find themselves with a lot to think about.

ROBIN PUGSLEY

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### LEARNING GENERAL PRACTICE

*Gaye Manwaring, K M Parry and R G Cairncross  
Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education,  
Edinburgh (1991)  
46 pages. Price £1.00*

Many young doctors are not clear about what they will be expected to know and be able to do on completion of their vocational training. As a result, they have difficulty in organizing their learning for themselves. For vocational training to become a truly educational process, and one that inspires as well as in-

forms, a system is needed that helps young doctors to identify their own learning needs and to be able to develop their own methods for meeting them. As an active process, this approach to vocational training will not only promote learning but will also make it enjoyable and enable tomorrow's doctors to meet the unknown challenges of future practice. This slim publication should make an important contribution to this process.

*Learning general practice*, although directed primarily at trainees, will also be of considerable value to those who help them to learn. It presents clear statements of content for the trainee year and provides valuable information about the national framework for training and the vocational training regulations. Its greatest strength, however, is in the sections that deal with the processes of learning. These present a broad range of options for the trainee to consider and to match against specific educational objectives. The message throughout is that the trainee should be the director of his/her own vocational training programme.

The Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education is to be congratulated on producing such a worthy successor to *Learning and teaching general practice* which provided valuable guidance throughout the 1980s. This new practical guide for promoting personal learning should be made available to all doctors from the moment that they decide to follow a career in general practice. Its philosophy and suggestions will also be valuable to those established principals who want to be actively involved in their own continuing education.

WILLIAM STYLES

*Regional adviser in general practice, North West Thames region*

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