

including trainees, who want to understand more about caring for mental illness in the community.

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**REATTRIBUTION: LINKING SOMATIC SYMPTOMS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS (video)**

Linda Gask and David Goldberg  
Department of Psychiatry, University of Manchester (1991)  
Running time 50 min. Price £35.00

'Reattribution' is the term used for cases of psychosomatic illness where patients have been enabled to 're-attribute' somatic symptoms to mood disorders rather than to physical illness. In this training video, produced by the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Manchester, a structured approach is adopted which is centred around film of clinical consultations involving patients with symptoms such as tension headache, abdominal pain and backache. Strategies are formulated and the viewer then has the opportunity to see these strategies being used by several general practitioners. There follow further consultations after which viewers are encouraged to use the strategies that have been presented.

All the cases shown are of patients with relatively recent onset of psychosomatic symptoms. The point is made that not all patients can 'reattribute' following only one treatment session. However, this is the only reference to the difficulties of treating patients with established psychosomatic disorders.

The video will be useful for trainee general practitioners but it is a pity that no warning is given of the pitfalls of attempting to treat all patients suffering from psychosomatic symptoms with the sort of strategies described. In established cases of psychosomatic disease the only strategy which may make a positive contribution to management, is to support the patient and wait patiently in the hope that an opportunity for 'reattribution' may arise.

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**EPONYMISTS IN MEDICINE: ALZHEIMER AND THE DEMENTIAS**

G E Berrios and H L Freeman (eds)  
Royal Society of Medicine, London (1991)  
149 pages. Price £7.95 p/b, £12.95 h/b

The idea of a series describing the lives and contributions of doctors who have given their name to a disease or syndrome is an attractive one and I started to read *Alzheimer and the dementias* with interest. However, I soon found that it was not the compulsive read that I had expected.

The book consists of contributions by several authors and this in itself makes it difficult to maintain a thread and the editors appear not to have succeeded in linking the sections together. The work is very much about the dementias, including a history of the condition before the 20th century, with chapters about the social aspects of Alzheimer's disease, the vascular dementias, a history of subcortical dementia and other forms of dementia. Only one chapter is devoted to Alzheimer and his life and this is the best part of the book. It is sad that he himself died at the early age of 51 years from rheumatic endocarditis.

The last chapter was an insightful analysis of Shakespeare's *King Lear* by J G Howells. I now understand much more about the complex psychopathology of the plot and realize that Shakespeare's picture of dementia may have one weakness. Throughout his disturbance the king is made to grow in moral stature — he has learnt through his disturbing experience. In fact, it is rare in dementia to learn at all.

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