

of the most useful and precise items of the book is a suggested list of skills 'usually present in psychiatric teams, but lacking in primary care' and 'skills normally present in primary care, but lacking in psychiatry'.

Unlike the conference which I found stimulating, I found this book disappointing. In covering much ground quickly, it often seems naive and not quite realistic in recommending what is needed, but then plays safe by adding caveats or saying that there is after all no evidence of effectiveness. It is realistic, however, in pointing out that we are no nearer to the goal of improving the mental health of the population than a century ago, despite advances in assessment and treatment, that suicide rates are rising and that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in the community is remaining constant. There may have been improvements, but we do not have the outcome measures for demonstrating them. Since the number of people with mental health problems seen in primary care is 10 times greater than the number seen by the specialist services, research is needed in the methods of collaboration and joint training suggested. However, considerable progress in collaboration has undoubtedly already been achieved.

JOHN HORDER

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HEALTH CARE AND GENERAL PRACTICE ACROSS EUROPE

W G W Boerma, F A J M de Jong and P H Mulder (eds)
Netherlands Institute of Primary Health Care and the Dutch College of General Practitioners, Utrecht, Netherlands (1993)
126 pages. Price NLG 22

Statistical data about general practice in European countries are scanty, and many deeply buried, in different languages, and not in a comparable format. Fortunately there are a number of secondary sources where the data have been collated to some extent. Examples are publications from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD). Then there are sources like books and journal articles, covering one or a small group of countries. Finally, individual correspondents can be approached. This joint publication by the Netherlands Institute of Primary Health Care and the Dutch College of General Practitioners is extremely ambitious. Thirty two countries in Europe are covered. Each country has an entry of about four pages, packed with information about the country, population and vital statistics, and details of the organization and financing of health care (secondary and primary care). Nearly all 32 countries have vocational training schemes for general practice — the mean duration is 2.7 years with the longest (five years) in Sweden and Finland.

The labour of collecting all this information must have been prodigious, yet it is far more up to date than is usual in this kind of publication. Even in countries undergoing major changes, the message is remarkably true to life. Anyone seeking information about any of these 32 countries would do well to make this their first source. They could then draw on the 156 sources listed, or they may need to go no further. The editors deserve congratulation on this excellent and well-researched publication.

PETER PRITCHARD

Honorary secretary, UK-Nordic Medical Educational Trust

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