

The Review Reviews

BETWEEN THE EARS: USE IT OR LOSE IT
WRITTEN AND NARRATED
BY PETER BLEGVAD
PRODUCED BY IAIN CHAMBERS
BBC Radio 3, Transmission: 3 December
2011, 2155–2230

Use It Or Lose It by Peter Blegvad is a fascinating radio play telling the story of a fictional GP, Dr Charles Proctor (Peter Blegvad) as he struggles with his failing memory and inevitable decline into the depths of dementia. The story addresses the day-to-day challenges of living with dementia and introduces the dubious 'Madam Aladdin' (Dame Harriet Walter) who proposes that dementia should be embraced, releasing us from the restrictions that life imposes on us.

The radiophonic music follows Dr Proctor's descent into amnesia. It reflects the feelings of disorientation in the early stages of memory loss and the blissful feeling of ignorance that can come along in the later stages of dementia.

We hear famous voices reflecting on memory. An excerpt from Emily Dickinson's *I Felt a Funeral in my Brain* contemplates the feeling of the mind facing its own collapse. Robert Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* is quoted:

'Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be'.

The combination of radiophonics, an intricate storyline, and the quotes from the past make this a piece filled with intrigue and mystery — it takes a few listens to fully appreciate it. The challenge of identifying the famous historical names and interpreting their words certainly adds to the appeal. For me, the ideas introduced by Madam Aladdin, about allowing your mind to succumb to amnesia, was the most fascinating part. Overall, well worth a listen.

Mhairi-Clare Bradshaw,
GP trainee, Wishaw Health Centre, Wishaw,
Lanarkshire.

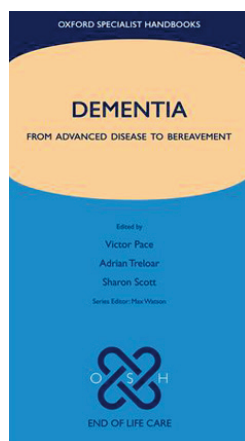
DOI: 10.3399/bjgp12X616427

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Mhairi-Clare Bradshaw
Wishaw Health Centre, Kenilworth Avenue, Wishaw,
ML2 7BQ, UK.

E-mail: mcbradshaw1983@hotmail.co.uk

**DEMENTIA: FROM ADVANCED DISEASE
TO BEREAVEMENT**
**EDITED BY VICTOR PACE,
ADRIAN TRELOAR AND SHARON SCOTT**
Oxford OUP 2011
PB, 426 pp, £37.99, 9780199237807



This 426-page lightweight softback pocketbook is a miniaturised heavyweight textbook of up-to-date guidance on approaches to dementia assessment and care. Small print and wafer thin pages remind us of the Bible. In some places attractiveness of text has been sacrificed to brevity, although a bullet-point style is balanced by short paragraphs which makes it easy to read. Some of the many acronyms used take a while to get used to.

While the book is aimed at 'consultants, specialist nurses and allied health professionals in geriatrics, neurology, old age psychiatry and palliative care', I recommend this book as a testament to excellence in care to help all of us who meet patients with dementia, whatever our background.

GPs are often involved in community care for those with dementia. They may be called to care homes they have never visited, where decisions made in the night must stand the scrutiny of others in the cold light of day. Decision making in an unfamiliar situation where advance care planning is patchy is never easy.

The ethical and legal aspects of caring for patients whose capacity is altered by cognitive impairment reminds us that we need a sound grasp of the facts in the difficult consultations we have with some of our patients with dementia. Advance care

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Michael Tapley
Willow Wood Hospice, Ashton under Lyne, OL6 6SL,
UK.
E-mail: m.tapley@willowwood.info

planning enables patients and their families to have important conversations early after dementia is diagnosed, so that the wishes of the patient and their priorities for care when they approach the end of their lives can be recorded.

Barbara Pointon's love of her 'wonderful husband' who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at the age of 51 years and was cared for by her until his death 16 years later, is so powerful it is worth buying the book for this alone. This textbook, within the pathological and pharmacological, the legal and the social, has soul. If you have never read a book about palliative medicine or dementia then this is an excellent place to start.

Michael Tapley,
Medical Director, Willow Wood Hospice, Ashton
under Lyne.

David Jolley,
Honorary Reader, PSSRU, Manchester University,
Manchester.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp12X616418