excellence set by Charles Lidz and his colleagues. In short the book is a masterpiece.

The authors set out to investigate how, in practice, informed consent worked in a psychiatric hospital. In particular they examined three clinical areas: a research ward, an out-patient clinic and an acute admission ward. The Mental Health Procedures Act, 1976 for the State of Pennsylvania had been enacted just prior to the study. Their theoretical framework rests on what they identify as the five components of the doctrine of informed consent. Certain *information* must be disclosed to a *competent* patient who should *understand* what he or she is told. From a position of complete *voluntariness* the patient should then make a *decision* which fully determines the outcome. How are these components to be measured? Clearly there is no psychiatric or psychological gadgetry that will do the job and too much interference by interviewers may distort the very procedure which is under scrutiny. The authors opted for two participant observers, one of whom 'lived with' the patients and the other with the staff. In this way the researchers breathed the air of the hospital and learned much of all those subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which information is communicated to and received by patients. A fascinating picture of life in the hospital emerges and any reader who finds it disturbing should sample something of the average British psychiatric hospital.

The many hours of eavesdropping, discussions and interviews are skilfully reported (much of them verbatim) and analysed. Some will be disturbed by the findings, others will not be surprised. The authors conclude 'that current informed consent policy has been a dismal failure', . . . it 'has not produced the results contemplated by its most ardent advocates'. But the discussion is more than a recital of familiar arguments; it has a freshness because it is free of psychiatric paternalism, legal nitpicking and arid philosophical theory. Indeed the authors suggest that their findings will cause little joy to both supporters and detractors of informed consent. The letter of the law was obeyed but in a ritualistic manner which frequently obscured its spirit. On the other hand patients were generally well looked after and there was no improper treatment because of failure to obtain informed consent. The study illustrates, above all else, what Professor Alan Stone describes in his foreword: namely, that the law is a blunt device with which to regulate the fine-tuning of complex human affairs.

From the introduction, which includes a critical review of previous empirical research, through the presentation of the study to the summary, the authors maintain a scholarly style which is free of polemics. The book is essential reading for all who have an interest in informed consent.

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Care of the Dying – A Clinical Handbook

Nigel C H Stott and Flora G Finley,
83 pages, London, £2.95 (paperback),
Churchill Livingstone, 1984

Science is objectivity and reason. Religion is subjectivity and intuition. Science follows the concept of rational morality – which is practical, analytical, rational and less emotional – but religious thinking is different – it is theoretical, empirical, moral and emotional. Both contradictory doctrines are practised by humans, not surprisingly, because contradiction is a characteristic feature of human nature. As far as the care of the dying is concerned, both schools of thought, mercifully, agree that one should 'begin at the beginning, go up to the end and then stop'.

This clinical handbook adopts a didactic approach, giving practical tips step by step as required in the care of the dying for a relative, friend, health worker and other helpers. Nineteen chapters deal with symptom control for pain, nausea, vomiting, constipation, intestinal obstruction, urinary incontinence, mouth care, anorexia, dyspepsia, hiccup, dyspnoea, cough, itch, pressure areas, fungating lesions, bleeding problems, compression syndromes, confusion, insomnia and weakness. The text is kept to a minimum and the book is illustrated by line drawings, making it an easy-to-read manual.

There are eight chapters devoted to the ethical aspects of care in keeping with care of the whole person: general approach, talking to patients and their families, avoiding confusion over therapy and food, the patient in the family, as death approaches, grief, religious differences and what to do after an expected death.

At the end there is a chapter on aids for the dying and some topics for discussion to give readers a chance to think things over and not feel they are

being forced into a corner.

I congratulate the authors on the tactful presentation of the text which on the one hand gives advice according to rational morality and on the other encourages devoutly religious people to adhere to their religions and cultural beliefs. The freedom of choice which people value so much during their life is ensured at the time of dying.

Contradictory advice from philosophy and religion was in fact resulting in confusion and this book clarifies it in an excellent way. I recommend this book unreservedly to all health workers, relatives or friends who are likely to care for a dying person.

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Developments in Human Reproduction and Their Eugenic and Ethical Implications

Editor, C O Carter, 236 pages, London, £18.50, Academic Press, 1983

As the preface to this book suggests 'men and women find technical advances affecting human reproduction disturbing'. This applies *a fortiori* to doctors who of necessity must deal with this minefield of research and clinical activity. The symposium on which this book is based, held in London in 1983, makes a significant contribution to this topical yet highly controversial field.

The first chapter by R J Aitken of Edinburgh deals with recent advances in contraception with special reference to a male pill Gossypol, pregnancy vaccination and derivatives of gonadotrophin releasing hormones. The literature is adequately covered but as ever one is depressed regarding the paucity of original thought and innovative flair in this field, a situation which has now lasted for several decades. Advances of a substantive nature have not been made; funding at the international level has been exiguous by any standards; the lead times prior to clinical investigation enforced by regulatory bodies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in North America have cast long and inhibitory shadows. Prospects for the future cannot be viewed with much optimism and at the time of writing there seems little likelihood of any major breakthrough until the mid-21st century at the earliest.

The next two sections deal with artificial insemination by donor and with the ethical situation surrounding conception *in vitro*. The first stresses that Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) is here to stay, that in some couples it remains the only alternative to childlessness and that, at least for the foreseeable future, the subject will continue to attract considerable media publicity. The second section which is in fact the Galton Lecture of 1982 was delivered by Dr R G Edwards and describes his well-known work with Dr Patrick Steptoe. The issue is considered mainly in the historical vein and reviews subjects already well covered in the literature.

The field of genetics dominates the remainder of the symposium. There are contributions on genetic registers, screening for carriers of recessive diseases and new developments in prenatal diagnosis. Again these areas have been more than adequately covered elsewhere and little new information is added.

The reviewer must profess a preference for the final chapter dealing with the legal implications of AID, *in vitro* fertilisation and embryo transfer. Here, at least, there is a refreshing, albeit brief, breeze of originality and a praiseworthy attempt is made to break some new ground.

This book scarcely merits a 1983 *imprimatur*. However, it may prove valuable to doctors, medical students and paramedical workers who in the past have not found the time to become conversant with these important areas of work.

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A Guide to The Mental Health Act 1983

Robert Buglass, 152 pages, Edinburgh, £9.95, Churchill Livingstone, 1983

In the post-Gostin era of psychiatric legalism the density of the legal jungle, and the frequency of attendant man traps, to which the mental health professional feels himself exposed is greatly increased. A jungle guide book is here expertly provided by one who was intimately involved in the arguing out of the conceptual and semantic terrain both inside Parliament and as Chairman of the Royal College of Psychiatrists Working Party.

Professor Buglass is a meticulous

writer, well suited therefore to legal psychiatry and he displays a detailed understanding and exposition of provisions which may baffle clinical colleagues. He clearly aims to provide a pocket reference book which may act frequently as a substitute for consultation of the Act itself, although of course he correctly demurs that there is no substitute for knowledge and interpretation of the exact wording of the Act. The book is constructed, as regards major topics, to correspond approximately in order with the parts of the Act and there is occasional intelligent expansion of discussion of topics of particular importance or difficulty, for example that of 'consent to treatment'. There is a uniform layout for each topic which gives background information, a very helpful listing of changes from the previous 1959 legislation and then a statement, frequently using the exact wording of the Act, of the relevant major provisions. The text is usually accurate and unambiguous, whilst providing helpful reference lists for further reading. There is a particularly clear explanation of the intricacies of the relationship between mental health legislation and the criminal law in the chapter on mentally disordered offenders. Similar awareness of other legislation touching on the formal and informal psychiatric patient is repeatedly demonstrated in a way which, at times, develops the book into a more general psychiatric legal commentary: it also goes beyond the Act by including a useful chapter on forensic psychiatric facilities.

At times, however, on reading some of the sections, one does have the feeling that the book would be better titled 'A Guide to Changes Represented by the Mental Health Act 1983'. Clearly, emphasising the ways in which the law is now different is important but, in terms of space, it is often done at the expense of greater explanation and exploration of the current provisions. Much space is also devoted, as far as some topics are concerned, to great detail of the arguments between pressure groups and interested bodies which preceded Parliamentary decisions on individual points, of which the author has intimate and personal knowledge. Lack of emphasis on explanation most clearly emerges in the treatment of Section 1 of the Act which deals with 'mental disorder' where the definition, use and relevance to other parts of the Act of the term and the four categories thereof do, in my teaching experience, give rise to considerable confusion.

A meticulous writer on legal matters would expect to be criticised

meticulously, I hope. There are a small number of errors in the book. Firstly, and very unfortunately, the grounds for admission under Section 3 (2)(c) are wrongly stated as '... for the health and safety of other persons ...'. Under Sections 2 and 3 the power of the Responsible Medical Officer to block discharge is said to be grounded in the patient being 'dangerous'; it should be made clear that this includes being dangerous to himself. Later it is stated in relation to Section 4 that, under the common law doctrine of 'necessity', urgent treatment can be given without consent to 'relieve serious suffering'. Although some uncertainty surrounds 'necessity' this is probably not true and serious danger to life is probably the appropriate basis. There is also an error and a confusion over consent to treatment. It is repeatedly wrongly stated that 'informed consent' is the required standard, perhaps because the book went to press before the recent cases of *Sidaway v Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals* and *Freeman v Home Office* where it was confirmed that only basic or real consent is required. Also, although rightly stated elsewhere in the text, it is said that Section 62 (urgent treatment) refers to both formal and informal patients. Space precludes exploration of this error but it does give rise to incorrect viewing of the legal justification for emergency treatment of informal patients, which is entirely common law in origin. The author then goes on to give guidelines for interpreting the competency criteria given in the Act. It should be made clear that, in an area recognised by the Mental Health Act Commission to be fraught with conceptual difficulties, these are statements of author opinion having no legal basis.

These few criticisms aside I strongly recommend Professor Buglass's jungle guide book.

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Moral Dilemmas in Medicine

Alastair V Campbell, 179 pages, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, £4.95, Churchill Livingstone, Third Edition, 1984

The fact that this is the third edition of Dr Campbell's book speaks for itself. He is widely recognised as having written a short, clear readable book which discusses a number of moral