BOOK REVIEW

Nursing ethics through the life span, 4th edn.

E Bandman, B Bandman. Pearson Education INC, Prentice Hall, 2002, US\$44, pp 333. ISBN 0-8385-6976-5

This is a broad based introductory text suitable, I suggest, for diploma level or first year degree level courses. The fourth edition retains some of the best elements of the third and updates much of the remaining text. The structure of the chapters is useful, providing a list of learning outcomes for the reader and flagging up the material to follow. The summary at the end of each chapter is also very useful for reviewing the key points, as are the discussion questions posed at the end of each chapter. Dealing with a number of the questions posed, however, requires familiarity with significantly more material than the chapters provide.

The life span approach is an interesting feature of this text. It has the virtue of ensuring that each significant, developmental milestone

is addressed from the perspective of ethics, including childhood, adolescence, and old age. This is in addition to the more standard elements of ethical theory, autonomy, consent, and ethical issues at the beginning and the end of life.

There is a sense in which the breadth of the material that the authors address is at the cost of depth and detail. As an introduction to a rapidly changing field, however, this is probably difficult to avoid.

Texts like this can model the philosophical skills of analysis and argument development. In general I suggest this is largely absent from this particular text. None the less a number of very useful case exemplars and vignettes are presented as potential discussion material, or as exercises for the reader—for example, chapter 15: Ethical issues in the nursing care of the elderly has 10 “cases”.

I found chapters eight and nine particularly useful. Chapter eight looks at ethical decision making in nursing, an issue that is very topical in the nursing literature. Looking seriously at the ethical decisions that involve clinical staff is very pertinent. This chapter deals in some depth with blocks to ethical thinking and with the notion of fallacies. The latter is

an issue that is frequently ignored in introductory texts, in my experience. It is a very welcome and informative addition.

Chapter nine addresses some ethical issues in relation to the procreative family. The chapter provides a useful introduction to a number of the key issues surrounding family structure, function, dynamics, values, and relationships. Three models of the family are discussed. The authors also raise a number of important issues surrounding reproductive technology, genetic screening, contraception, genetically inherited diseases and termination of pregnancy. They consider individual versus family rights, and the right and duty of society to limit individual freedom in relations to reproductive issues.

One final comment is to do with proof reading. There are a number of typographical errors in the text and some direct repetition, particularly in the early part of the book.

In summary, I found this a useful introductory text for preregistration diploma level courses; particularly the chapters on decision making and the procreative family.

P A Scott