

The summary and conclusions are a list of the working group's recommendations derived from their discussions outlined in the preceding chapters. These include the need for scientific soundness, quantification of risks versus benefits, limitations of non-therapeutic research to situations of minimal risk and parent and child consent issues. Draft rules for ethics committee organisation are also presented.

Obviously there are areas of controversy which will exercise those interested for many years. However, this report, as a distillation of so many man-hours of experienced thought, will act as a point of reference and balance in the tension between doing no harm to individual children and avoiding hindering essential research for the good of many children. In my opinion this book should be considered as essential reading for those who perform or supervise research involving children and for those who serve on ethics committees.

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The Healing Arts: A Journey Through the Faces of Medicine

Ted Kaptchuk and Michael Croucher, 175 pages, London, £5.25, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1986.

The BBC published this book to accompany one of its major television series. I had not seen any of the episodes before writing this review, but the book is certainly readable in its own right.

It is written for the lay public but could well inform medical students and other aspiring health professionals who are generally taught little about the history of their own medical heritage, let alone how it compares and contrasts with that of other systems of medicine. It starts with a fairly objective if somewhat over-simple account of the philosophical bases of the major systems of healing and of some of the specific practices which are widely in use in the world today. It argues that, in its origins, the dominant system in the West – scientific medicine – was based on Greek thought, and had much in common with the systems still widely practised in China and India. It suggests that, although Western medicine has achieved much by its discovery of the

part played by micro-organisms in disease and of methods to defeat them, it could achieve far more were it to acknowledge openly the ideas, still inherent in Eastern theories of illness, namely that ill-health is essentially a loss of balance and that the process of healing consists of restoring that balance.

In essence, the book is a plea to Western practitioners and patients to regard what is still likely to be dubbed 'fringe' medicine as 'complementary' rather than 'alternative'. Kaptchuk, who is responsible for the content of most of the book, trained in both Western and traditional Chinese medicine. He now directs a Pain and Stress Relief Clinic in Boston, USA. The large, eclectically-minded staff offer any one of 22 different regimens to those whose pain has not been satisfactorily controlled by orthodox Western medicine. He argues that effective therapy in every system of medicine is dependent upon the performance of rituals by the healers. The rituals vary from system to system, but they all work as magic does, that is by altering the perceptions people have of specific phenomena. In the case of healing, the sufferers have to perceive themselves as capable of overcoming forces responsible for their pain by strengthening the agents working to restore their balance. The imagery required to do that will depend upon the cultural heritage and assumptions of the sufferers.

The examples he chooses to illustrate his argument are drawn from many kinds of therapeutic situation. They include such diverse instances as the shaman's involvement of relatives in the treatment of illness among the Samoyed tribe in Arctic Siberia, the Simonton's 'guided imagery' fantasising techniques in cancer therapy in Dallas, Texas, and, in another Westernised setting, the effect of prescribing by an authoritative figure as compared to someone of lesser status. In each instance, it is fair to conclude that the healing occurred as a result of the sufferer's changed perception.

The message which the book sets out is not a new one, but it is elegantly stated and persuasive. Reviewing the book for the *Journal of Medical Ethics* it is appropriate to ask whether it raises any ethical issues. The authors do not suggest that ethical issues are raised when practitioners of scientific medicine refer their patients to practitioners of complementary healing procedures. Indeed, they advocate conventions of sorcerers and scientists!

Since most of the therapies are likely to be a good deal less invasive and potentially lethal than those with which orthodox medicine is frequently involved, it may be thought that ethical issues are not likely to arise. But it is pertinent to ask whether the conduct of doctors who seek to discourage patients from consulting practitioners, who are prepared to try to give them the help (the magic) which they are not receiving from orthodox methods, is ethical or unethical. Doctors are sometimes inclined to claim that they are protecting their patients from quacks. It is not always easy to accept that other healing rituals may be as or more effective than those which have become standard practice in the Western system of scientific medicine. This book may help that acceptance.

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Madness and reason

Jennifer Radden, 174 pages, London, £5.95 paperback, George Allen and Unwin, 1985.

'Bad or mad' we say – so madness is an excuse for wrongdoing. Ms Radden is concerned with why this should be so. Consider the following syllogism:

'Peter is not responsible for his being mad.
If Peter had not been mad he would not have killed Paul.
Therefore Peter is not responsible for killing Paul.'

Ms Radden calls this argument the 'medical model' and demonstrates that it is false. The following counter-example shows why:

'Peter is not responsible for Paul calling him a fool.
If Peter had not been called a fool he would not have killed Paul.
Therefore Peter is not responsible for killing Paul.'

Ms Radden, therefore, rejects the idea that we may excuse a wrong act simply because it is caused by illness. For her it is the effect of the madness on reasoning that is crucial. The question is not 'is he ill?', but 'how can he reason about the act'? And there are only two key factors which underlie the excuse: *ignorance* and *compulsion*. If the madness is such that the person is ignorant of why or how he acts, or if he is compelled to act,