

Primarily directed to a nursing audience, the book has much to offer any reader with an interest in health care ethics. A brief imaginative step will enable the reader to recognise the commonalities between nurse-client ethical concerns and those of any health care worker. Similarly the discussion of the context of ethical issues between nurses and physicians would prove a useful resource for both parties. The position of 'whistle-blowers' and the background to the Oregon proposal regarding a rationing system for health care are of pertinence to many health care systems today. Whilst of general utility the book does not ignore the unique constellation of factors affecting nurses and the ethical dilemmas this may pose, nor does it fail to recognise, for example, nurses' care-work. These and other special concerns of nursing are seriously addressed.

It was somewhat disappointing to see that although broader non-individual ethical concerns were addressed at the end of the book in examining policy and resource issues, the thorny issues raised by health promotion or the new public health movement received only a cursory mention. Only one scenario explicitly addresses health promotion and the readers are invited to analyse this for themselves. Given the international concern with health promotion and the emergence of the new public health movement, together with the fervour with which many health professionals are encouraged to participate, this treatment can only be described as wanting. The focus of health promotion and public health on the population as a whole, and the concern with probable outcomes make the area difficult to assess morally and worthy of far greater attention.

Though erudite, the book is also practical. Thus the reader is directed to a rich seam of further reading. In the body of the text, for example, practical responses to the scope of individual responsibility in situations of ethical uncertainty are to 'examine the most alterable possibilities first'. At times the American terminology is an advance, thus 'parentalism' is used in place of paternalism with its advantage of sexual neutrality.

The authors see a principal aim of their book as being to enable nurses to contribute more effectively to a wide-ranging debate about contemporary ethical issues. In large part they have

achieved their goal admirably whilst at the same time providing a potential resource for others with an interest in the field. One remaining confusion is what exactly is it to 'hang out shingles' (page 96)?

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## The politics of psychiatry in revolutionary Cuba

Charle Brown and Armando M Lago, New Brunswick, USA, Transaction Publishers, 1991, 217 pages, \$16.20 sc or \$27.95 hc

This short book is an impressively detailed account of the use of psychiatry in Cuba as a means of political repression.

Published by Freedom House, an independent human rights organisation, it draws on a wide range of sources, including Amnesty International, to document the Castro regime's use of electro-shock, psychotropic drugs, isolation and physical beatings, against those it regards as dissidents.

The historical and political background to these practices are described in an introductory section; there is a useful appendix of relevant reports, articles and documents, and an introduction by the leading Soviet dissident, Vladimir Bukovsky. But the real heart of the book is a series of case-reports. These are presented in a direct, clinical style which contrasts sharply with the atrocities they describe. The cases speak for themselves...

*Ariel Hidalgo Cuillen, History Professor:* '... I had to stand - not only because of the lack of space, but also because the floor ... was covered with excrement, saliva, sperm, etc.'

*Orestes Martinez Hayden, Medical Student:* '... forced to accept a rubber bit in (his) mouth and held down on a wet floor covered with urine, vomit and excrement ... electrical current applied until (he) went into convulsions...'

*Jose Martinez Hayden, Truck Driver:* '... placed in a water tank and given electric shock...'

*Juan Penate Fernandez, Historian:* '... forced to watch three times per week while the orderly, Heriberto Moderos, gave electric-shocks to political dissidents strapped on a wet floor'...

As Bukovsky comments, this is not the political abuse of psychiatry as it was practised in the Soviet Union. There is little attempt to justify torture, to redefine it as treatment. 'Diagnoses' are sometimes indicated but they are largely redundant. It is enough that the accused is 'dangerous', a diagnostic concept under the control of State Security.

The outrages described in this book may seem remote from psychiatric practice in the western democracies. The problems are also closer to home, however. This is evident in the occasional *cause célèbre* which makes the headlines. But it is also apparent in the experiences of individual patients (poignantly described in *The Catch of Hands* (1), for example), and, more generally, in the inadequacies of community care provisions which abandon patients to the streets. It is thus not by contrast but by identification that this book comes as a timely reminder of the vulnerability of psychiatry to abuse.

### Reference

Lee, B. *The catch of hands*. London: Virago, 1992.

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