

competence of senior colleagues has been severely questioned. Against a background of patient consumerism, litigation and complaint, informed consent and the rationing of health care, or of truth, provide rich material for unusually strident public debate. Health workers now realise uneasily that there is a need to move from the conscientious complacency of yesterday to a preparedness for the complex dilemmas of tomorrow.

They need a concise, relevant, un pompous tool and the Education Department of Marie Curie Cancer Care is to be congratulated on providing it. This book sets out a brief, relevant outline curriculum for a multi-disciplinary audience, based firmly on virtue ethics and the case-conference approach. The discussions move beyond euthanasia and the persistent vegetative state to relationships and power, autonomy and the advance directive, and harm and benefit analysis. It combines guidance with flexibility. The cases selected for discussion would encourage specific topics to be discussed or local disturbing cases to be analyzed without scapegoating, and so to provide ongoing instruction at unit level.

This is too valuable an initiative to be restricted to hospice and palliative care, but hospice colleagues should be grateful for it. They may even allow a seditious bioethicist, lawyer or philosopher to contribute to their discussions, and help prepare them for tomorrow's world by using in the document's own words 'ethical theory to illuminate and add substance to the resolution of practical problems'.

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Examining doctors

Donald Gould, London, Faber and Faber, 1991, 148 pages, £12.99

This ambiguous title symbolises the struggle between the themes of this book. It does examine doctors with all their faults as well as reviewing the methods that the profession uses to regulate and to train them. It attempts to explore how society perceives the activity of the profession. The author bases his conclusions about the present state of the medical profession in the United Kingdom on his own experience and interviews with a small

sample of doctors who are drawn from a wide range of posts. The main problem of having one from each level in the profession (from the student through the junior staff to the chiefs of the medical hierarchy) is the clear lack of representativeness of these individuals. It is tempting to conclude that many of the doctors chosen would be those whose views would be most critical of the present state of medicine and possibly most in harmony with those of the author. For example, the general practitioner chosen is one who prides himself on his frugal prescribing. The junior doctor chosen is one who was in two minds whether to read medicine in the first place and now feels jaded about the profession.

Provided the reader does not accept this book as a representative study of the opinions of doctors at different stages in their careers, the book can be enjoyed as a very readable mixture of wit and ire. However, I worry that some of the conclusions will merely feed the growing prejudice that most doctors are either tired or jaded.

The author takes us through the evolution of health care in this country, which makes a very useful foundation for understanding the pressures on the contemporary doctor. He clearly illustrates the changing interaction between the patient and the doctor with time although his pointed substitution of 'customer', 'client' etc for the term 'patient' wears a bit thin with repetition. The present dilemma of the doctor struggling in the conflicting role as both the individual's healer and the system's manager is thoughtfully explored.

Second only to his vilification of organ transplantation, are the author's attacks on the medical education system, which he seems to perceive as having bred this brood of arrogant and self-defensive egotists. This book is very topical, with the author predicting a number of the changes in emphasis from hospital to primary care which have been highlighted by recent reports. However, he appears to have ignored some of the exciting developments in undergraduate education. Most medical schools, stimulated by the recent GMC recommendations, are focusing their teaching on rationing facts and spending more time on developing skills. He looks back in horror at his own medical education but in the same building today he could see a curriculum which embraces ethics, problem-solving, multidisciplinary management and palliative care as well as exciting ways of helping the student

to discover the essential building bricks in the basic medical sciences.

The author's anecdotes and wise analysis of the current problems are clearly the fruits of long experience. However, the book's overall rather negative tone may irritate the reader but as a source of subjects for argument this book is bound to be popular, especially with those in training. It challenges the current generation of doctors to defend their attitudes and to justify their roles as healing intermediaries in the world of developing science and changing needs.

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Lives in the balance: the ethics of using animals in biomedical research

Edited by Jane A Smith and Kenneth M Boyd, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, 352 pages, £19.50

This volume, a report of a working party of the Institute of Medical Ethics, is the result of a three-year project of study undertaken by scholars gathered together from a wide variety of disciplines. The text seeks to analyse the major issues encountered by anyone involved or interested in the debate concerning the use of animals in biomedical research. As such, it covers a large range of areas and issues, from the degree to which the suffering of non-humans should be considered in the context of any moral conclusions we may arrive at concerning their use in experiments, to whether or not it is both desirable and justifiable to use animals in schools or at other levels of education. The volume also includes a brief consideration of philosophers' attitudes to animals, from Plato to Peter Singer.

Specific cases of experimentation are examined in detail, for example the use of monkeys in research into the treatment of human diabetes. Here the possible benefits of such experimentation are assessed. Questions of funding, experimental procedure, of the type of animal best suited to research goals, and the techniques used in the research itself are all examined and detailed. Given that the treatment of