

Book reviews

Philosophical Issues in Nursing

Edited by Steven D Edwards, London, Macmillan, 1998, 205 pages, £14.99.

Steven Edwards's collection provides a welcome addition to the under-explored area of philosophical issues in nursing. It is recommended as a well-founded introduction to this novel area for undergraduate and postgraduate students in nursing and other interested parties.

The work is written by a range of authors with backgrounds in philosophy, nursing, or both, all of whom are involved in nurse education. The volume ambitiously spans enquiry in the areas of ontology and epistemology with one paper engaging in value-enquiry or ethics. A slightly disjointed feel to the various contributions is ameliorated to some degree by the summaries which precede each chapter. These are helpfully written by the editor to guide the reader through the book. Whilst no prior philosophical expertise is assumed the text succeeds in avoiding over-simplification.

The opening section of the collection examines nursing practice and knowledge. A fascinating paper by Joan Liaschenko discusses various types of nursing knowledge, including knowledge of how to get things done, knowledge of patient experience and knowledge of the limits of medicine. Large portions of this knowledge Liaschenko claims are invisible and silenced. Keith Cash's chapter proposes a conception of nursing as a practice. He relates this understanding to the problem of reaching a widely agreed theory of nursing. Cash proposes the merits of some of the traditional virtues that have united nursing. Although the latter suggestion is somewhat preliminary in nature it provides a useful starting point

for further work. A well-written contribution by Trevor Hussey examines the concept of change and its application to nursing. Hussey proposes a Lamarckian model of evolutionary change as being of greatest utility when considering, for example, theory development. A conceptual analysis of holism is undertaken by Simon Woods. This well-signposted chapter explodes some of the myths underpinning the rhetoric of holism in nursing. Positivism as a method in nursing research is discussed by the editor, Steven Edwards. Although this chapter centres on debates which will be familiar to nurse researchers the cogency of the paper has much to recommend it. In a dense chapter which utilises some helpful illustrations Edward Lepper discusses the feasibility of arriving at a credible theory of mind, from four differing perspectives: nursing, science, common sense and philosophy. Drawing upon the work of Heidegger and Dreyfus, Stephen Horrocks proposes a radical approach to curricula in nursing in which the practical world would be seen as more fundamental than the theoretical world. Janet Holt provides a powerful exposé of many philosophies in nursing. Despite their popularity the vast majority of these many philosophies do not match up to the rigour necessitated by a critical evaluation of assumptions and arguments. In a wide-ranging chapter Paul Dawson ambitiously, and with a considerable degree of success, addresses the nature of the self. Philip Ross reaches some very different conclusions concerning the nature of the self when he discusses compulsory treatment. Ross's work provides an interesting response to the anti-psychiatry movement.

Philosophical Issues in Nursing illuminates the novel partnership that is emerging between nursing and philosophy. This disparate collec-

tion provides a useful point of departure in this burgeoning area of enquiry.

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MRC Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice in Clinical Trials

Medical Research Council, London
Medical Research Council, 1998,
46 pages, free.

The background to the publication of this very helpful, well and clearly written book (one of the Medical Research Council [MRC] series) is the publication of the *European ICH Harmonised Tripartite Guidelines for GCP* in 1996; knowledge of some well publicised (and perhaps some less well known) lapses of ethical probity in clinical trials and the perceived need for public accountability in public corporations and the fact that the clinical trials supported by the MRC cover a far wider than the drug production licensing ambit of the European guidelines.

The draft was circulating for comment amongst MRC-supporting groups, and has now been published following revision.

The randomised controlled trial is accepted as the basis for the paper; human research without controlled trials is to be the subject of another paper under current preparation.

The aims of the guidelines are chiefly the difficult job of balancing concurrently and without loss the elements of the ethical clinical care and safety of trial participants, the