

and that therefore the good conduct of the new generation of professional helpers is something for which ultimately we are all responsible.

References

¹Shaw, G B S, *Man and Superman*, Act III.

²*Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Regulation of the Medical Profession*. Cmnd. 6018, HMSO, London, 1975.

Self help in health

The latest fashion in writing on health care consists in insisting that we must persuade individuals to take more responsibility for their own health. The idea gains impetus from the ever-growing demand for determining priorities in medical expenditure. How useful if the emergence of self help not only increases self esteem in patients, but also saves money!

But what are the limits to this seemingly attractive proposal? Like do-it-yourself plumbing, do-it-yourself health care raises a sceptical eyebrow or two among the experts. While the amateur is happily imagining that all is well with his self-maintained system, what dry rot is festering beneath the floorboards, as it were? Thus many doctors worry more about the failure of some patients to seek or to follow their professional advice than about their dependency. This is a problem frequently discussed under the heading of 'non-compliance' — a watchword for *heteronomy*, if ever there was one.

Of course the issues to be faced are much more complex than any simplistic opposition of autonomy and compliance might imply. The real problem is to identify those areas of health care in which reliance on professional expertise is either inappropriate or unnecessary. As the discussion in our case conference indicates, it is possible to be quite adventurous and imaginative in the search for such areas. It seems to us a voyage of exploration well worth making.