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Working abroad *Good for you and the NHS*

In a document published in July by the Department of Health on its website www.doh.gov.uk, entitled *International Humanitarian and Health Work – Toolkit to support good practice*, Liam Donaldson tells us that time spent by NHS staff working abroad can 'provide individuals with personal inspiration, refreshment and perspective which can add to their professional development and growth as well as befitting the NHS'. The document outlines the benefits to patients and the NHS as well as listing personal and professional benefits. The guidelines build on the previous guidance (EL (95) 69) which was issued in June 1995.

There are information checklists for individuals to consider when seeking employment overseas and it provides details of sources of further information, including MMA Healthserve (www.healthserve.org). Other chapters outline how different skill levels can be developed and sustained for international work and a further chapter looks at 'Quality Assurance' briefly considering such areas as accountability, revalidation, performance issues and registration renewal. The two appendices provide further detail of projects, placements and skills pre-requisites for some of the main agencies. There is also advice on maintaining NHS pension scheme benefits.

Another document of interest on the site is a *Compendium of the NHS's contribution to Developing Nations*. It currently holds details of some 45 volunteer teams within the NHS who are involved with overseas work. It lists the name of the Trust involved, the countries they are involved in, an outline of the work being undertaken and the contact person within the Trust. They would be interested to hear details of work being undertaken by others which is not currently listed within the Compendium.

Both are encouraging and informative documents for those thinking of getting involved in short term work overseas and yet are anxious about the impact on their career prospects. Read together with the new *CMF Medical Mission Handbook* prepared for those contemplating such a period of short term work abroad in a Christian context, you will be well equipped to make an informed and prayerful decision.

Peter Armon is CMF Overseas Support Secretary and MMA Healthserve Medical Director

Where there is no Psychiatrist: A Mental Health Care Manual



Vikram Patel
Gaskell 2003
£10 Pb 266 pp
ISBN 1 90124 275 7

The concept for the manual appears to have arisen from

David Werner's book 'Where there is no Doctor', which was published initially in 1977. This book was a great success, being used widely by health care workers especially in developing countries. 'Disabled Village Children' and 'Where there is no Dentist' followed this. With the publication of this manual, Vikram Patel has attempted to meet a similar need for mental health problems.

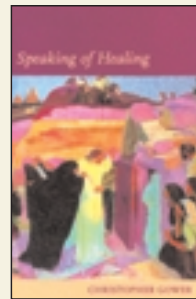
The format of this manual is very different from a traditional textbook of Psychiatry. The approach is more problem and context-orientated. For example, there is a chapter entitled 'Behaviours that cause concern' and another entitled 'Habits that cause problems'. There are multiple boxes, tables and illustrations. The use of boxes and tables certainly helps in focusing on important aspects and things to remember. However it would have been more useful if the material in the boxes were in larger print. The overall impression is of an overcrowded book. The artistic illustrations are not very useful except for giving variety from reading the text. It is difficult to have meaningful artistic illustrations in Psychiatry.

The author states in his preface that the manual has been written with the needs of the general health worker in mind. He suggests that this would include anyone from a community health worker to a general practitioner. It is very difficult to write a manual to meet the needs of such a varied readership. However, from my experience as the General Secretary of the Evangelical Medical Fellowship of India, I agree that this manual would be useful in developing countries and mission hospitals and mission stations. As a Psychiatrist currently practising in Australia, I feel that it has less to offer health workers in developed westernised nations.

Some Christians may have difficulty with parts of the manual, for example the section on sexual problems. Apart from this, the content is mostly non-controversial and the author has done a good job in attempting to meet a great need in developing countries where mental health professionals are scarce.

Kuruvilla George is Deputy Chief Psychiatrist of Victoria, Australia and formerly General Secretary, Evangelical Medical Fellowship of India

Speaking of Healing



Christopher Gower
SPCK 2003
£8.99 Pb 118 pp
ISBN 0 281 05539 4

This book arose from a conference held in conjunction with the College of Preachers at St

Marylebone Parish Church where the author is Rector, and is based on his MTh dissertation. It reviews the contemporary health and healing scene succinctly and sensibly, meeting medical concerns for truthfulness and for realism.

The book's main purpose is to advise preachers how to preach about healing. Four models of biblical interpretation are presented. These are not mutually exclusive and there is overlap, but the book highlights how the preacher's model inevitably colours what is preached:

- Literal – 'based on a firm belief in the historical truth of the miracles recorded in the Gospel healing narratives'
- Liberal – 'likely to be suspicious of any kind of supernatural miraculous healing, expecting God to work through normal means'
- Metaphorical/spiritual – 'texts on blindness or deafness may be used to talk about being deaf to the word of God or blind to spiritual realities or sin'
- Social/community – 'this focuses on the reintegration back into society of the sick and disabled who had previously been marginalised'

These four models are then applied to the thorny issues of 'sickness as a punishment for sin' and 'healing and the



demonic' with lengthy quotes from a range of Christians such as John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement, and Rico Tice, curate at All Souls', Langham Place. Finally, the author illustrates what he believes to be the essential synthesis of all four models with his own example 'preaching the Gadarene demoniac'.

I cannot be as enthusiastically ecumenical as the author Christopher Gower, but this is a very stimulating book that anyone with an interest in Christian healing should read.

Andrew Fergusson has a portfolio career which includes being Chairman of the Acorn Christian Foundation

The Edge of Life: Dying, Death and Euthanasia



John R Ling
Day One Publications 2002
£8.99 Pb 288 pp
ISBN 1 90308 730 9

This book takes a distinctively scriptural approach to the issues of death, dying and the ethical crisis in which we

find ourselves in the early years of the 21st century. The biblical underpinning of our traditional ethical position is reviewed, the nature and origins of many of the recent changes are examined and the relevance of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to these areas is well set out. It is refreshing to have such a clear foundation laid before the three primary issues of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia are examined in more detail. The link between these is well established and the grey areas of suicide, persistent vegetative state, eugenics and 'quality of life' are addressed with sufficient clarity for much of the 'greyneess' to be dispelled.

Some of the legal principles are critically examined in the high profile cases reviewed, such as those of Anthony Bland, who was left in a persistent vegetative state following the Hillsborough tragedy, and John Pearson, a baby born with Down's syndrome who was rejected at birth by his mother and sedated until he died by the paediatrician looking after him. Set against the background of the Nazi holocaust experience, the sequence of events following the decriminalisation of euthanasia in the Netherlands is used to illustrate the

progression of thinking there once principles were set aside.

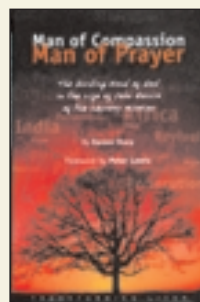
Help and support in dying and bereavement are well handled. Palliative care and the hospice movement, so often led by committed Christians, are brought into focus not simply as an end in themselves, but as examples of positive alternatives to the 'Culture of Death'.

It is significant that this book has been released even as further efforts are being made to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is a most effective stimulus to Christian thinking in a field in which it is assumed so often that the Christian has nothing to say except to object to change. The chapter entitled 'So what must we do?' expresses well the concern that we must turn first to God. Only he can motivate, empower and resource his people. Only he can make it possible for us to care, educate, lead, assert truth and stand as witnesses to his way, his view of life and his salvation freely offered to all.

The Christian is thus challenged to avoid slipping into the current worldly mindset by standing clearly upon biblical ground when considering these critical issues. The healthcare professional is challenged to see life in a deeper and broader perspective and to consider the person as more than the vehicle for their pathology.

George Chalmers is a former Consultant Geriatrician and Clinical Director at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He is President of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics

Man of Compassion: Man of Prayer – the Guiding Hand of God in the Life of John Harris



Doreen Sharp
Paternoster Press 2001
£7.99 Pb 114 pp
ISBN 1 85078 431 0

John Harris had a long and distinguished career as a medical missionary on two continents.

Although he was most closely associated with the Leprosy Mission, he and his wife Elsie first served with WEC (Worldwide Evangelization for Christ) alongside Helen Roseveare in the then Zaire. Later unable to return to war-torn Zaire, they moved to India. The family then made yet another move to fill a vacancy in Nepal, and

learned a third language. As it happened, their final move was back to Zaire where John died in an accident in 1995, five years after his official retirement age.

As a general rule, missionary biographies are written by close associates of their subject, and tend to give a somewhat one-sided view. This one is no exception as John Harris' sister wrote it. Despite this, it is actually a very readable story of a remarkable couple. There isn't too much by way of medical detail, but I found the description of his prayer life inspiring. An attempt is made to give more insight with statements from a wide variety of people connected with the Harris family over the course of their work. Since my wife Julie and I are also going to serve with the Leprosy Mission in Nepal, this book was of special interest, but I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in medical missionary work.

Tim Lewis is a Medical Missionary in India/Nepal and former CMF Student Staffworker in Ireland

AIDS and You



Patrick Dixon
OM & ACET International Alliance
Kingsway Communications
2002
£4.99 Pb 138pp
ISBN 8 17362 470 4

Available free of charge for developing countries from isdixon@dircon.co.uk

The Truth about AIDS met a pressing need in the late 1980s for clear information on the unfolding HIV epidemic. Many Christian doctors grappling with its grave implications appreciated the distinctively biblical approach of Dr Patrick Dixon's book. Any book on AIDS dates rapidly and *AIDS and You* is the third edition and a shorter, more accessible version of *The Truth About AIDS*.

Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu estimates that churches and Christian organisations are providing over 60% of HIV community programmes in Africa. Dr Dixon and ACET (AIDS Care Education Trust) have played a part in mobilising the response of Christians in the UK and supporting the response of many Christian groups internationally. The book summarises the role of followers of Jesus as those who should

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provide unconditional, compassionate care for all affected by HIV/AIDS and teach effective prevention while respecting and upholding the historic teachings of the church.

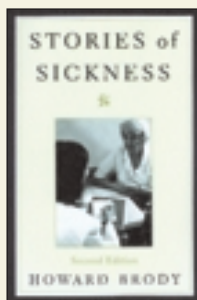
These principles are used to address issues such as the use of condoms, HIV testing, the relative risks of transmission, stigma, the secret of a good sex life and dealing with death. Dr Dixon's skill at communicating without medical jargon makes the book suitable for a wide audience. Health care professionals involved in education and developing HIV prevention and care initiatives will find it a useful tool.

Such a book would be incomplete without some advice on how to make a practical response and a new chapter has been added on 'Good practice in HIV/AIDS projects'. Inspiring case studies and a valuable section on principles for mobilising a church response were the highlights for this reader. However, the chapter has the look of an overlong appendix and would benefit from being reorganised and trimmed for the next edition.

Royalties from sales of the book are being used to make it more widely available in the countries most affected by HIV where it will undoubtedly be a valuable asset to many communities. The full book text may be found at www.acet-international.org

John Day is a Specialist Registrar in Infectious Diseases at King George Hospital, Goodmayes, Essex

Stories of Sickness



Howard Brody
Oxford University Press
2003
£22.95 Pb 295pp
ISBN 0 19515 140 2

The author of this book is a Professor of Philosophy and Family Practice at Michigan State University. With chapter headings such as: 'Sickness, Life Stories and Self-Respect'; 'Sick Roles: Practices and Life Plans'; 'How Sickness Alters Experience'; 'Stories of Life with Disability', and 'The Patient - Health Professional Relationship as a Narrative' the author sets out to explore the many dimensions of what illness means to the sufferers and those around them. He refers to depictions of illness in classical literature and other non-fiction accounts

as the basis for his approach.

This is not a Christian book, although it is a scholarly and weighty addition to the growing field of what might be called 'narrative based medicine', a useful and timely counterpoint to the evidence based approach beloved of exponents of performance management who currently seem to dominate health service thinking. Two quotations perhaps sum up the main message of the book, both from the final chapter: 'We could do much worse than to graduate physicians who resemble Berger's English country doctor in having always about them *the air of one trying to recognize* - trying to make a link between their own anguish and the humanity of the anguished individual before them (Berger and Mohr 1967).' The last sentence of the book says: 'As physicians and other health professionals pay more attention to the stories of their patients, their ethical quest to enhance personal autonomy and self-respect in the wake of sickness will be aided by an increased awareness of the richness of human response to illness and anguish.'

Whilst containing a detailed and powerful analysis, it is a difficult book to read, perhaps reflecting the philosophical training of the author. It also lacks any spiritual perspective on this important area, and whilst agreeing with the author's emphasis on the importance of what he calls 'narrative ethics', for these reasons I found it slightly disappointing.

Huw Morgan is a Consultant in International GP Education

Still bored in a Culture of Entertainment: Learning to Live with Passion and Wonder



Richard Winter
IVP 2002
£7.45 Pb 156pp
ISBN 0 83082 308 5

A book on boredom – how... boring? Actually, the more one thinks

about boredom the more interesting it becomes! What causes boredom? Why are some people more prone to boredom than others? What's the difference between being bored for a short period and being chronically bored with life? Is boredom always bad or can it be a stimulus to search for true satisfaction? Is there an antidote to boredom or is boredom a 'normal' part of life?

This book by psychiatrist and theological seminary professor Richard Winter seeks to answer these and other questions by examining the historical, sociological, psychological and cultural roots of boredom. Winter explores the philosophical contributions of postmodernism and the loss of meaning to the experience of boredom and the 'bitter fruits' of sexual addiction, aggression and risk taking that so often follow.

A wide range of perspectives is covered and there is much that will interest, whether reading it for professional or personal reasons. I particularly enjoyed the chapter dealing with the psychological research data and also those discussing the relationship of boredom to our present culture of leisure, overstimulation, entertainment and consumerism.

In the final chapters, Winter moves from an analysis of boredom to ways of counteracting it. He provides general advice and also argues for the necessity of discovering the 'bigger picture' of passion and wonder for God and his world.

The Christian reality is present throughout this book, always challenging but never obtrusive or jarring with the flow of the argument. This makes the book accessible to non-Christian and Christian alike and I certainly wouldn't have any hesitation giving this book to an interested (or bored!) enquirer. I think anyone who works in a pastoral role whether doctor, nurse, psychologist or church worker, will find the book informative and helpful to their practice.

Jim Paul is a Specialist Registrar in Palliative Care in the North Thames region and former CMF Student Staffworker

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