



Making it in British Medicine
Essential Guidance For International Doctors
 Graeme Catto, Peter Cross & Sobina Dosani

- Radcliffe Medical Press 2004
- £21.95 Pb 184 pp
- ISBN: 1 85775 8757

Author Sabina Dosani was staffing a BMA stand at a careers fair when she was overwhelmed by enquiries from International Medical Graduates (IMGs). She responded by co-authoring this book which is crammed with succinct information for both recently arrived graduates and doctors contemplating a move to the UK. The expected information re IELTS and PLAB 1&2 is full and in the case of the IELTS language test most informative and well researched. The authors follow the route of the IMG from the stage when he/she is contemplating moving to UK through to arrival and settling in and exploring the openings in the NHS, including negotiating PLAB and job searching. Throughout the writing is marked by both empathy and sensitivity. Some paragraphs are an excellent example of conveying a great deal with few words, eg. the passage on clinical governance.

What makes this book live are the comments from overseas doctors at many different stages, feedback and advice from Dr Yong Lok Ong (overseas doctors Dean, London Deanery) and Professor Michael Carmi (North London GP, whose surname is incorrectly spelt throughout the book). Additionally there are comments from PLAB examiners, IELTS assessors and the examiners from the Royal Colleges. It is this leavening of the loaf with anecdotes, advice and wisdom that gives this book a special appeal. The retrospective view of the NHS, annotating the major changes since 1948, is a superb summary and a reminder of the constant change that professionals within the NHS have grown to cope with.

As a GP I would have preferred a longer chapter about general practice and a greater exposition of the new contract, with emphasis on the necessity of being computer literate. However the first experience of the NHS that these doctors will encounter is in the hospital. Therefore advice re clinical attachments and the role of the SHO within the district hospital setting is essential. Judicious use of flow charts and diagrams aids explanation of the acute trust organisation. There is excellent advice on teamwork and inter-professional relationships. There is advice on how to cope with homesickness, exam failure and personal health issues, including stress. There are lists of helping agencies, both professional and illness orientated. The proper role of the GP in personal health care is clarified and applied. A most informative chapter on the British way of life is called living in Britain. This is a mine of information as to the idiosyncrasies of the infra structure which those born in the UK take for granted.

Finally the book provides four pages of acronyms commonly used in UK medicine from A&E to WBC. This is most useful and not surprisingly there were some I had not encountered or fully understood. A book worth reading and recommending to our colleagues from overseas, it is also a useful exercise for UK graduates to see our profession as overseas colleagues experience it. This is a well produced and planned book of advice and information.

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Life in our hands:
Christian perspective on genetics & cloning
 John Bryant & John Searle

- Inter-Varsity Press 2004
- £9.99 Hb 191 pp
- ISBN: 0 85111 7953

Barely a month goes by without an announcement of a new development in biotechnology. The challenge for Christians is to keep abreast of such advances and respond biblically. In *Life in our hands*, biological scientist John Bryant and doctor/pastor John Searle attempt to outline some of the issues at stake, and explore how Christians can make balanced ethical decisions.

The book is based on the London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity, given by Bryant in 2002, and seeks to tackle a huge range of topics related to biotechnology: from genetically modified crops to the Human Genome Project, and prenatal diagnosis to the genetic enhancement of embryos. In each case, they provide an extensive and helpful overview of the science, then a brief review of the ethical literature - both Christian and secular - before formulating a Christian response.

The authors also include several useful chapters at the beginning of the book exploring the state of contemporary bioethics, particularly Christian ethical decision-making, and whether or not the use of biotechnology falls within the our remit as stewards of God's creation. The biblical concept of man being made in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26-27) is funda-

mental to the Christian perspective on many of these technologies, as Bryant and Searle point out. However, their detailed explanation and defence of evolutionary theory rather detracts from their exploration of this important theme.

Many of the ethical principles discussed in *Life in our hands* have been debated at length, both within the Christian community, and more widely, and the authors expound a few views - particularly regarding the beginning of life and the status of the embryo - which may not sit comfortably with some CMF members. However, the book provides a useful overview of biotechnology as it stands today, whilst the authors repeatedly make reference to the lack of biblical proof texts to apply to many of these technologies. Instead they, write:

'All these questions represent real human dilemmas. Even if we believe that we know what we would do, we must not assume that other people - even those who share our faith - will reach the same answer. The church community needs to support in a non-judgemental manner those who are dealing with such dilemmas: listening and, if asked, providing advice.' (p131)

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The Hospital by the River
A story of Hope
 Dr Catherine Hamlin with John Little

- Monarch Books 2004
- £7.99 Pb 304pp
- ISBN: 1 85424 673 9

Many of those who have worked in Africa and who have come face to face with the desperate, despairing young woman with a vesico-vaginal fistula caused by obstructed labour and have faced the daunting prospect of trying to repair it, will know the name Hamlin and know of the fistula hospital in Ethiopia. Not all will know their story but it makes enthralling reading.

Catherine and her husband Reg set off for Ethiopia, on a short-term contract, in 1959. Some 45 years later, Catherine is still there and still at work. Her husband sadly died in 1993. Their original calling had been to establish a midwifery training school. Overwhelmed by the needs of the women who had suffered the appalling consequences of prolonged obstructed labour, the 'fistula pilgrims' as Reg called them, because of the tremendous journeys that some of them had undertaken to reach help, they set about teaching themselves how to repair such fistulae.

Catherine has successfully operated on over 25,000 fistula patients and trained many doctors from all over the world to do likewise. The hospital they have set up has many ex patients amongst both its nursing and medical staff. This book tells not only the Hamlin's story but provides glimpses into the lives of many patients and the problems faced by those living in extreme poverty.

The Hamlins have lived through good times and bad, respected and supported by

the Emperor and his family. They saw many of their Ethiopian friends imprisoned and killed by the communist regime. Throughout the book, Catherine speaks honestly about the joys, dangers and sorrows of missionary life, of difficulties faced bringing up children in a country which is not your own, where missionary parents can so easily become too busy and miss out on the needs of their children. Never willing to turn a fistula patient away, they were often inundated by needy patients and at the end of a busy day they had the additional labour of raising funds for their fistula work.

In a story full of heartbreak and miracles, Catherine's love for God and for her patients shines through, showing itself in the way in which she so often goes the extra mile that her saviour taught her. Honoured by many prestigious institutions and governments around the world, the establishment of a purpose built fistula hospital, where the techniques they have so successfully pioneered continue to be taught to others, stands as an even more fitting testimony to their life long commitment to God's calling on their lives.

A challenging and readable book but it should carry a 'watch out God might speak to you through it' warning. Such needs still exist in many of the resource poor countries of the world even in the 21st century.

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Keeping the Vision Alive
The Story of Barnardo's
 Winston Fletcher

- Barnardo's 2005
- £14.99 Pb 156pp
- ISBN: 1 904659 11 x

We grow great by dreams... Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them; nurse them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true.

Woodrow Wilson,
 28th US President

Great visions require great people to carry them forward, but all too often, the adage that we die and our dreams die with us is true. *The Story of Barnardo's* shows that this need not be the case. 'Dr' Thomas Barnardo never qualified as a doctor, wherein lies a tale of intrigue and deception, yet was a man of vision with a charismatic personality. He had a passion for the vulnerable that enabled him to found a charity that has become a world-leader, helping over 100,000 disadvantaged children each year. However, Barnardo was also plainly human, and in spite of a strong evangelical faith could be intolerant, ill tempered and untruthful. Perhaps this was not too different from many Old Testament characters on whom the vision of a chosen people and Promised Land was built.

I have great admiration for the author for undertaking what seems an impossible task of writing an entertaining, informative and inspiring biography of an organisation. I read this book with high expectations; as a paediatrician, I was aware of Barnardo's work but knew little about the organisation and its founder. Whilst I have learnt much, it was a struggle to do so. Apart from the great photos, this book is not easy bedtime reading. Indeed, I am

unclear at whom it is targeted.

Fletcher starts with a useful sociological study of the nature of charitable giving and historical changes in welfare provision. He then supplies a brief biography of Barnardo, followed by the history of his organisation from 1905 to 2005, set in the context of the changes of the 20th and early 21st centuries. As with the man himself, the organisation has not been without fault, but has grown and adapted to changing needs and perceptions to maintain its focus on helping vulnerable children.

In the light of the Victoria Climbié inquiry, the Children Act 2004 and the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, the book finishes with a look to the future and Barnardo's UK Agenda. Reflecting back on the nature of welfare provision through the charitable sector, the author leaves us with rather a frustrating set of questions that are aimed in part at Barnardo's, and in part at government and other agencies. Perhaps one purpose of this book is to raise these questions. In that spirit, I shall leave you with a few:

- Where should the balance between state and charity provision of welfare services lie?
- Are there too many children's charities?
- Can the slow decrease in the total number of people in Britain giving to charity be reversed?
- How should Barnardo's (or any other charity) divide its resources between front line childcare, political and social campaigning, and research?

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