

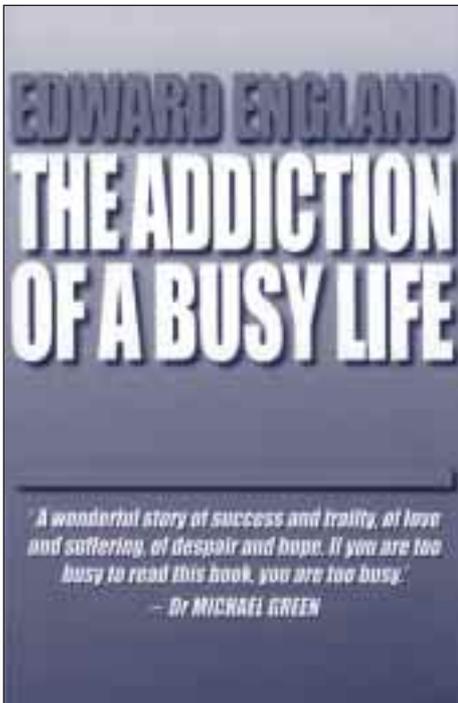
# reviews:

## The Addiction of a Busy Life

Edward England. Aviemore Books, Crowborough. 1998. 160pp. £5.99 Pb. ISBN 1 901387 09 7

I was initially asked to write this review for the Autumn 1998 edition of *Triple Helix* just as we were leaving for our family holiday. I said 'no'!

A devastating heart attack is the megaphone God uses to wrest publisher Edward England from his addictive busyness. This book is an extraordinarily honest account of four years in the life of this successful man. We feel his physical, mental and emotional anguish as he struggles with the lessons God has for him during a period of enforced inactivity. He fights with denial, pride, embarrassment and fear of losing honour and reputation and is brought painfully to the realisation that he is not indispensable. From here he finds the freedom of living with God's limits, appreciating the joy of each day's blessings.



Though a personal journey (at times with too much detail for me), the lessons Edward England learnt through great trauma have much relevance to busy health professionals. It is easy to rationalise our frenetic lifestyles as commitment rather than addiction. I found myself

nodding in agreement at times. Non-stop activity always has consequences. For ourselves it brings restlessness and satisfaction only in doing more, it squeezes out intimacy with God and others, and ultimately brings burnout or premature illness.

While 'we may be foolish enough to think we do not need to change the pace for ourselves . . . non-stop activity places an intolerable burden upon those we love'. Diary entries from Edward's wife Ann (a doctor) poignantly illustrate this. Unfortunately this addiction is so widespread that there is often little point in asking colleagues or friends for help.

The last brief chapter, 'A Final Word', is an excellent distillation of the book's message and ends with a prayer asking God to be our pacemaker - words all busy people should make their own.

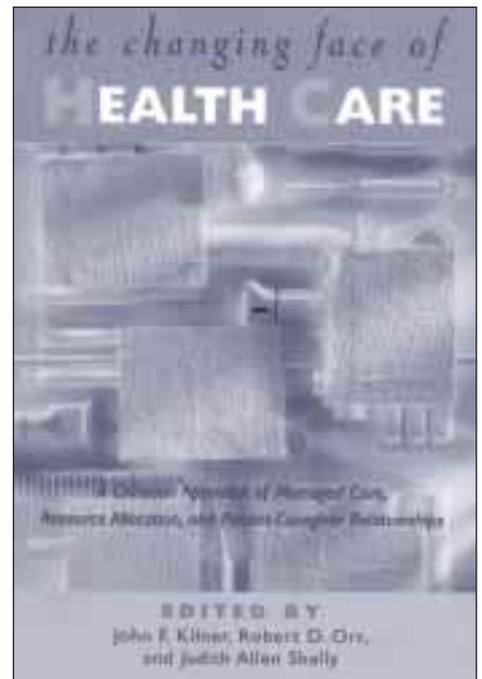
**Kirsty Saunders**  
(Community Paediatrician, St Albans)

## The Changing Face of Health Care

Eds John Kilner, Robert Orr and Judith Shelly. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge - Paternoster Press, Carlisle. 1998. 314pp. £19.99 Pb. ISBN 0 85364 864 6

The words 'Trust me, I'm a doctor' may no longer reassure doubting patients, yet one recent survey suggests that 75% of UK 16-21 year olds continue to hold the medical profession in the greatest respect. This millennial generation is found to value personal honesty and caring above ambition and independence. However, these young people are sceptical both of politicians, as a group, and of the power and effectiveness of governments. This is the tax-paying generation who will pay for our medical care and old age, unless of course they change the rules.

*The Changing Face of Health Care* ponders questions of how to provide for the USA's health needs, both present and future. It brings together 22 essays written by those who participated in a conference held in 1997. Currently, there is a shift in the USA to a system of controlling cost by managed health care. The focus of the book is therefore, inevitably, on rationing and how to make sense of it, and its authorship is both overtly Christian and multiprofessional in nature. The book



deals exclusively with one country's system of health care, how it has developed and where it might be going. A thoughtful afterview, by the British public health physician and ethicist Stuart Horner, provides a helpful perspective on the issues within the book for the non-American reader.

So, should we still trust doctors? Robert Orr paints a picture of new medical graduates swearing ethical oaths, but these are post-Hippocrates and post-modern and place less emphasis on protecting the vulnerable. Are nurses better placed? Both Barbara White and Judith Allen Shelly raise the spectre of over-stretched nurses unable to perform their caring vocation whilst being forced to cut corners. Compromising professional values is also a risk for administrators, although William Atkinson is robust in defending a middle way between profit and professionalism, between idealism and realism. As he points out, bad health care is also bad business!

Ultimately, this book must be judged on its handling of the ethical questions that surround managed care, resource allocation, and the subject of rationing. Rationing means different things depending on your geographical perspective. From the UK perspective, a country which disenfranchises 41 million of its subjects from full participation in its health care system looks unhealthy. From the US perspective, waiting lists and black-listed drugs provoke similar feelings. Governments the world over are grappling with cost containment, quality

improvement, and fairer systems of access to health care, not least through an emphasis on primary care.

This book gives much food for thought on these matters, not least on how to meet the needs of the most marginalised in our societies - the poor, the old, the mentally ill, and those from the ethnic minorities. The 'Good Samaritan' receives two thoughtful essays. Economist Kenman Wong suggests that the Samaritan might just have coped with the business ethics of a first century managed care organisation. Bioethicist Edmund Pellegrino isn't so sure. Perhaps you should buy the book and decide for yourself.

**Jamie Harrison**  
(GP Tutor, Durham)

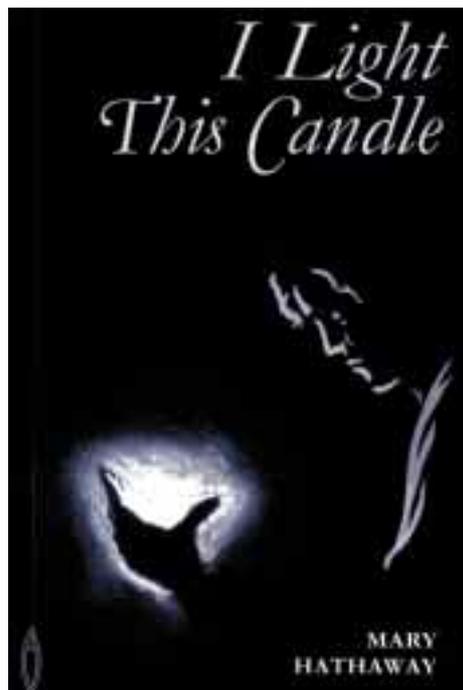
### **I Light This Candle**

Mary Hathaway. Arthur James, Berkhamsted. 1998. 91pp. £4.99 Pb - all royalties to cancer research. ISBN 0 85305 476 2

This beautiful and profoundly moving book of prose, poems, prayers and reflections chronicles with great honesty and integrity Mary Hathaway's journey through despair and hope. Her story begins with her son's diagnosis of a rare form of cancer which required months of intensive treatment. As he recovered Mary was then told that her father had only days to live. A week after his funeral she herself began treatment for breast cancer.

Her writing brings to life often painful and sometimes terrifying feelings, expressions of 'pain, anger, despair, fear, weakness, panic, beauty, hope and love'. Most of all *I Light This Candle* is about Mary's relationship with a travelling companion who never left her, though it often felt to her as if he had, Jesus Christ. There are poems of lamentation and angry questioning - often echoing the Psalms and parts of Job. There are also outbursts of love and joy acknowledging that the cycle of faith requires both resurrection as well as death and dying. Thus whilst it is born out of pain the book is nevertheless also a story of hope. As such I have no doubt it will benefit anyone who is faced with the challenge of life-threatening illness as well as those who grieve.

My one hesitation is that of commending the book to the person who knows they are



dying and for whom the possibility of cure expressed in the message from The Cancer Research Campaign might be just too painful. That said, Mary Hathaway has written with both courage and sensitivity, giving us a privileged insight into the experience of bereavement and cancer, one that can be shared with those who are going through their own times of darkness.

**Guy Harrison**  
(Chaplain, Dorothy House Foundation, Bradford-on-Avon)

### **The Safe Sex Hoax**

Margaret White, edited by Joanna Bogle. Unity Press, London. 1998. 40 pp. £3.90 Pb. ISBN 0 9533454 0 8

This is a challenging read, highlighting some of the blind spots of social policy and their consequences. It points out that 'if any Chief Medical Officer had recommended a drug for preventing pneumonia and after 10 years the result had been to increase the prevalence of the disease, the policy would have been rapidly abandoned'. However, there has been no recognition that since prescribing contraceptives for teenagers there has been an increase in teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and later in carcinoma of the cervix. There is pressure to extend this policy.

In the nineteenth century poor children were sexually abused as prostitutes until

the Salvation Army and others campaigned to outlaw this evil, and made it illegal to have sex with a child under 16. Are we going backwards? There is an 'almost schizophrenic attitude' on the part of authorities, treating paedophilia very severely whilst subsidising sexual activity in those as young as 12. When girls have sex they are generally looking for love, whereas boys crave excitement. Sex without lasting relationship inevitably leads to anticlimax. Teenagers are not good at lasting relationships and so become disillusioned.

We know the effects of tobacco on health; hence the TV heroes and heroines do not smoke. Yet despite all the evidence, these role models are often in bed together on an early date. It seems ironic that the feminist lobby, so keen to give women 'the right to choose' has, by increasing the volume on the 'everybody's doing it' message,



effectively made it a lot more difficult for young women to choose to say 'no'!

This booklet cuts through political correctness most refreshingly, and challenges us to action. My only disagreement was with what I felt to be an overstatement of some problems associated with the use of the oral contraceptive pill.

**Maggy Spence**  
(GP, Essex)