

quite rightly scathing in her condemnation of the virulent, unpleasant epidemic of sanctimonious moralising which has accompanied the AIDS epidemic. In these chapters and in the chapter on the 'Quality of dying', the author discusses the psychosocial problems which patients and their carers encounter. This is an area in which there is a major role for the liaison psychiatrist in improving communication, being honest with the patient and the relatives rather than colluding, and developing and providing an appropriate means of support and care for relatives and patients. This would seem to me to be a far more valuable way of using the time of a liaison service instead of assessing parasuicides, the majority of which could be assessed by junior physicians.

The chapter entitled "The quality of dying" begins with the following quotation from Colin Murray Parkes: "Medicine should not confine itself to the prevention of death, any more than family planning should confine itself to the prevention of birth". Many doctors are unable to cope with this inevitable aspect of illness.

The next chapter looks at the quality of life from the health economist's viewpoint. The book concludes with a plea that the immeasurable aspects of life should not be ignored in the new world of statistical analyses and cost comparisons.

This is an excellent book which is of equal value to the professional and lay reader. It should be read by all practising doctors. Perhaps more importantly, the philosophy within should be taught in medical school and given at least as much prominence in the curriculum as the more heroic side of medicine.

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Strangers at Home: Vietnam Veterans Since the War. Edited by CHARLES R. FIGLEY and SEYMOUR LEVENTMAN. New York: Brunner/Mazel. 1990. 416 pp. \$26.95.

Twenty authors from various backgrounds contribute to this collection of writings on the experiences of Vietnam veterans since the war. The unique nature of the Vietnam conflict is described well, and the reader gains great insight into the increasingly ambivalent and negative attitude of the US nation towards the war as it progressed, resulting in the returning veterans being stigmatised and feeling alienated. Reference to veterans of other wars highlights the universality of many of the post-war experiences.

The book is divided into three sections, the first of which considers the war itself and those who fought in it. The chapter by Smith on "Oral history" is particularly gripping, especially the verbatim account of a Marine interrogator describing both the difficulties he faced in Vietnam and the let-down he felt on his return. The second section deals with the returning veterans

readjusting to US society, including accounts of research carried out into their estrangement, psychosocial readjustment, and employment experiences. My favourite passage in this part of the book is Wilson's account of the war's effects on the personality development of the many adolescent soldiers. The final section looks at the actions of the government and other agencies. Stanton's chapter on drug use and Bitzer's account of the mistreatment of many veterans suffering mentally as a result of the conflict make good reading. The appendix to Bitzer's chapter is the memorandum advising use of the term 'post-traumatic disorder' in place of 'post Vietnam syndrome' emphasising that this is not restricted to Vietnam veterans.

In conclusion, this book might be of interest to those dealing with war veterans and indeed others involved in major traumatic events. Overall it is well written and easy to read. The multidisciplinary authorship ensures varied perspectives, including economic, psychological and sociological viewpoints. It gives a broad, detailed and comprehensive picture of the Vietnam veteran since the war. Its only drawbacks are a tendency to repetition at times and the occasional American word or phrase which is difficult to understand.

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Substance Abuse and Dependence. By HAMID GHODSE and DOUGLAS MAXELL. London: Macmillan Press. 1990. 262 pp. £37.50 (hb), £14.95 (pb).

The need for 'caring professions' to have knowledge and occupation-specific skills in dealing with substance misuse problems is not in question, but latching onto the right educational message is not so easy. Within a training programme, a mix of specialist and generic input can go side by side, complementing each other, but in a book this is more difficult to achieve. This book is billed as a practical guide for a wide range of professionals, students and other workers within the field and should therefore be judged against its relevance to those groups and the effort given to addressing their needs.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1, "Identifying the problem", gets off to a shaky start with a chapter defining the nature of dependence: I am certainly prejudiced in that this is not my idea of dependence, but while the specialist might follow this text with interest I suspect the target readership will be confused. Another chapter on "Substance misuse careers", is particularly well written and instructive, however. Part 2, "Treatment and management", is perhaps the most balanced section, all three chapters are very readable and informative. The chapter on "Psychosocial interventions" is particularly attentive to the consumer. Part 3, "Complications of substance abuse", has an excellent summary of medical complications which is well pitched for