

Computing for Clinicians. By TIM CHARD. London: Elmore-Chard. 1987. 144 pp. £18.00.

The author of this volume had a difficult objective: he sought to brief those colleagues who enjoy a computer-free existence on both the basic principles of computer systems and various clinical applications. These include the role of computer systems in data capture and analysis, computerisation of medical records, clinical diagnosis by machine, and a discussion of the benefits of computer-assisted instruction in medical schools. Most practitioners would probably feel that at least one of these topics would be of interest, and much of the book is both wise and sound. For example, the section describing the installation of computer systems stresses a number of pitfalls for the unwary, and the author throughout stresses the practical limitations of computer systems as well as their possible benefits.

That said, this is not the easiest book for the layman to read, as it is peppered with non-essential jargon which may frighten off potential readers. For example, the technical chapter includes detail (such as a discussion of collision-detection in networked machines) which should never be needed by *any* end-user. There are also areas in which the author's views are somewhat unusual – for example, in classifying algorithmic procedures for data analysis as types of expert systems, and in some technical definitions.

Although this book makes few specific references to psychiatry, anyone wanting a critical review of the rapidly changing field of medical computing as it appeared *circa* 1987 would probably find it to be a useful introduction. However, they would be well advised to ignore its more technical aspects.

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The Transition to Parenthood: Current Theory and Research. Edited by GERALD Y. MICHAELS and WENDY A. GOLDBERG. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 381 pp. £27.50.

The transition to parenthood has been subject to increasing study since the 1950s, when debate first polarised around the question of whether this period takes the form of a serious crisis or only a briefly stressful phase. However this question is answered, the transition to parenthood, stretching from the beginning of pregnancy to the first months of infancy, must rate among the most significant events in adult life. Its academic study, which this book charts, is peculiar in involving co-operation and debate between a wide variety of disciplines.

The aim of the book is to outline the current status of the subject, and contributors duly set out to review the literature, report on their own research, and present the latest theoretical models. Specific chapters examine the individual's motivation to parent, the effects of

parenthood on psychological development and self-perception, changes in couple relationships due to parenthood, and the effects of social, familial, and individual intervention and support programmes.

The book is in three sections. An initial section on adaptation to parenthood under typical conditions leads into a second section on adaptation in conditions of risk. Individual chapters explore medical risks such as maternal age and premature birth, and psychosocial risks such as adolescent parenthood, comparing adaptive and maladaptive responses together with typical vulnerabilities and risk profiles for these groups. A final section examines ways in which parents might be assisted through this period of change, ranging from social support networks to more formalised intervention programmes before and after conception and birth, for a wide range of individual and family situations. Research findings on the effectiveness of these interventions are reviewed. Throughout the book individual contributors attempt to synthesise conceptual and research findings, point to methodological shortcomings of previous work, and suggest areas in which further research is needed.

This book will be an invaluable source for all those wanting an overview of the current state of work in this field. It is an academic and research-orientated text, setting out to provide an intensive and critical review of previous work. Clinicians will also find this book of relevance to their work, particularly since clinical practitioners have tended to neglect this period in the life of parents. The section on intervention strategies will give much food for thought, especially for those working with infants and new or expectant mothers.

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Paradigms of Clinical Social Work. Edited by RACHELLE DORFMAN. New York: Brunner Mazel. 1988. 432 pp. \$61.50.

In 1970 there appeared in the social work literature a useful book entitled *Theories of Social Casework* (eds R. W. Roberts & R. M. Nee, Chicago University Press) – a book that still has current value for its content, style and concise approach. The volume under review is an earnest but somewhat pretentious (and certainly over-long) attempt to update this kind of approach to modern clinical social work practice. The latter is defined as social work with individuals, families, and groups as distinct from the broader field of social work at a community level of intervention. The contributions in the book revolve around a case involving a family and chosen by the editor. The contributors were asked to set out how their particular theoretical approach could be applied to the case, how it would work in practice, and what its limitations would be. Such an approach has