

a whole. The growing caution imposed by increasing negligence claims in the USA is placed in perspective in a sound penultimate chapter. This is followed by a short glossary of terms.

This is a substantial work, rich in essentials and unpretentious. The diagnostic detail is particularly well chosen, and it is provided to a degree often missing from work dedicated to physical treatment. It is essentially readable, and although the unavoidable frequent abbreviations have a jarring effect, the scale-pan type of review approach has been avoided and documentation, although perhaps over-selective in places, is adequate. There must be few works of this magnitude on this subject in which there are no printed chemical formulae, in which the 'caring' approach for patients is so apparent, and in which there is a good deal of plain clinical psychiatry of the 'hands on' sort, helpful for trainees.

The context, plan, and sentiment of the book is a powerful mixture, and quite apart from its instructive potential it is enjoyable to read.

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Reality Orientation: Psychological Approaches to the 'Confused' Elderly (2nd edn). By UNA P. HOLDEN and ROBERT T. WOODS. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. 1988. 353 pp. £11.95.

This is an excellent book and an enjoyable read. The preface to this edition suggests that the "book was never intended to be just about reality orientation", and the authors cover a wide range of psychological topics from basic behavioural programmes for incontinence to advanced reality orientation (RO) groups. The book is divided into two parts: the first, 'Theory and research', is well balanced by the second, 'Practical application', which includes 101 ideas for formal RO sessions and discusses theoretical and practical issues in different settings, from an ill-designed hospital ward to the patient's home. There is a welcome emphasis throughout on staff attitudes, and their positive approach is very encouraging to those of us who agree that "attitudes towards the elderly in western society have often in the past been discriminatory, rejecting, and negative".

The book is written by psychologists, but is accessible to all disciplines, and the particularly useful chapter on 'The basic approach - RO in everyday use' should be compulsory reading for all involved in the care of demented patients. It is essentially guidance about how

to approach and converse with confused people on a day-to-day basis. It broadens the concept of RO from a specific treatment to a sensitive, individualised, non-threatening approach to the confused patient to be used in every interaction. There is a good chapter on assessment, stressing the usefulness of and the amount of information which can be obtained from informal testing, using everyday objects and interactions, e.g. looking at a magazine, rather than subjecting the patient to the greater anxiety of a formal testing situation. The book is informative about RO, and contains a list of references from a wide variety of sources, but its special contribution to the field is its emphasis on attitudes regardless of which psychological approach is used.

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Human Ageing. An Introduction to Gerontology (3rd edn). By D. P. BROMLEY. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 325 pp. £5.95.

This is the third edition of a book with an established pedigree, and provides a precise and clear introduction to the psychology of human ageing, and more. It differs from the second edition in that the section on the history of human ageing has been removed, and much more emphasis is placed on the interrelation of the various facets that make up the study of gerontology. This is well demonstrated by the introduction of a new section on social policy and the elderly, which examines in depth the political and social pressures which can be brought to bear by the elderly and also the difficulties experienced by elderly people subjected to social prejudice in terms of welfare provision.

The section on psychological disorders is a bit thin, and the terminology used a little outdated, but this is not specifically a textbook of psychiatry and is designed for a much wider readership. If anything, the book suffers from having too much information in one text, and is certainly too concentrated to read comfortably in a single sitting. Nonetheless, it does provide a broad information base and should be considered a valuable addition to any library, from the local library to the specialist psychiatric library. At £5.95 it is very good value for money.

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