

Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

The Mistreatment of Elderly People (2nd edn)

Edited by Peter Decalmer & Frank Glendenning. 1997. London: Sage. 278 pp. £45.00 (hb), £15.99 (pb). ISBN 0-76195-262-4 (hb), 0-76195-263-2 (pb)

I remember reading Alex Baker's article 'Granny battering' in *Modern Geriatrics* 23 years ago (1975; August, 20-24). The same Alex Baker who challenged us with a view that admission of older people with dementia to the long-stay hospital wards of mental hospitals of that time represented nothing but 'slow euthanasia'. A clinician with his eyes open and undulled by the routines of everyday commitment and responsibilities.

Fashions have changed. The 1970s saw babies, wives and (naturally) grannies being battered. Children, wives and elders are now, perhaps, more subtly, 'abused or mistreated'. There is no doubt that the phenomenon occurs and has a worldwide distribution. This British discovery has been investigated with the greatest vigour in the gerontology world of the USA, but there are contributions to the literature from many countries. Yet this second edition of a well-received book remains British in its authorship and, for the most part, in its discussion of considerations. This maintains a sense of ownership of the problem; it is part of us, something to be understood, something we should do something about - our dirty washing.

There is a good deal to be learned. The chapters offer an interesting mix of scholarship and personal experience set against emerging attempts to encourage good practice and provide appropriate legislation. Peter Decalmer writes from his experiences as an old age psychiatrist and his case examples reflect this. General practitioners, geriatric physicians and social workers might bring forward a different spectrum, but these suffice to clarify the issues. Not all of us would want to designate such cases as examples of 'elder abuse', there is such a range of complexity in the habits of families and their responses

to illness and other difficulties. Not only families but governments (social policy) and professionals in the 'elder care' industry are exposed to hazards or temptations in their interactions with a vulnerable, dependent minority population. Frank Glendenning's chapter on residential care includes reference to the poignant paper by Tellis-Nayak & Tellis-Nayak (1979; *Gerontologist*, 29, 307-313), still worth reading again and again, and we must humbly reflect that life in such 'homes' is a product of the world outside with its pressures and values magnified. All those caught up in such tragic scenarios are best seen as victims rather than originators of sin.

This is a good book, a bit heavy for a starter. Why not get a quick feel for the subject from Bennett & Lacks' (1988) chapter on 'Elder abuse' in *Principles and Practice of Geriatric Medicine* (ed. M. S. J. Pathy) (Chichester: John Wiley, pp. 193-199). Then move on to this more comprehensive text.

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Pick's Disease and Pick Complex

Edited by Andrew Kertesz & David G. Munoz. 1998. New York: Wiley-Liss. 301 pp. £58.50. ISBN 0-471-17792-X

Larry Hansen has described the nosological debate surrounding a controversial 'entity', dementia with Lewy bodies, as the Tower of Babel. This book is a little like the Babel fish in *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a living universal translator making sense of any language. The book is a model of its kind, meeting the nosological issues head on, and the editors make a laudable attempt to bring some clarity to the debate. Their efforts are supported by a degree of scholarship seldom found in a multi-author text. It is particularly pleasing to see a lack of ethnocentricity in the referencing - if the key reference is in

Japanese or French, it is cited. Neither do the contributors conform to the deplorable modern tendency to undervalue everything not published within the past five years. The editors propose that a number of conditions (defined either histologically or clinically) share enough similarities to be termed Pick complex. Some of the conditions included in this are Pick's disease, fronto-temporal dementia, cortico-basal degeneration, semantic dementia, primary progressive aphasia and dementia lacking distinctive histology.

Each of these clinico-pathological syndromes is dealt with in the 19 chapters. The chapters are a mixture of reviews (e.g. Hodges, Garrard and Patterson on 'Semantic dementia' and Knopman on 'Dementias lacking distinctive histology') and detailed discussion of certain aspects of particular syndromes (e.g. LeWitt on the 'Movement disorders of corticobasal degeneration' and Delacourte and colleagues on the 'Biochemistry of the cytoskeleton in Pick complex').

Support for the editors' approach is found in the penultimate chapter by Clark & Wilhelmson who describe the dementias linked to chromosome 17q21-22. Data from 13 families show that this region is implicated in four conditions thought to be within the Pick complex - disinhibition-dementia-Parkinson-amyotrophy complex, familial progressive subcortical gliosis, hereditary dysphasic disinhibition dementia and fronto-temporal dementia - and one which has not previously been included, palido-ponto-nigral degeneration.

This book will probably appeal mostly to specialists in the dementia field but could with benefit be read by those interested in brain disorders and by general psychiatrists. It would be a useful addition to any medical library.

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A Clinician's Guide to the Menopause

Edited by Danna E. Stewart & Gail Robinson. 1997. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press. 243 pp. £38 (hb). ISBN 0-88048-754-2

According to a recent report from the World Bank there are about 500 million