

**Suffering: Psychological and Social Aspects in Loss, Grief and Care.** Edited by AUSTIN H. KUTSCHER. New York: The Foundation of Thanatology. 1986. 196 pp. \$32.95.

This is an interesting, rather philosophical book, as its title would suggest, rather than one which is intrinsically clinical and practical. It seems to aim at stimulating physicians to think about the practice of medicine, the nature of the doctor-patient encounter, and the fact that, as one contributor points out, "We are all patients - it is just that some of us become physicians as well". He suggests that for the doctor to have suffered a serious illness is one of the best ways to improve the therapeutic relationship. While personal experience does undoubtedly improve many physicians' insight, most doctors have little experience of serious illness, and yet many of them do develop helpful and insightful empathy into the patient's condition.

Most of the topics dealt with are of relevance to general medicine, and many to terminal illness, dying, and loss of the future. They could be of interest also to psychiatrists, especially the portion dealing with suffering in chronic mental illness. Those who practise in liaison-consultation and those who support or consult in hospices or other terminal care teams will find this book of particular interest. It is well referenced and researched, and would be a useful adjunct for a general medical or postgraduate library. At the price it may be rather too specialist for most general hospital or psychiatric hospital libraries, but it would certainly be of use to those preparing papers on aspects relating to terminal illness or working in a hospice and other related settings, depending on the budget available.

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**Psychopharmacology: Current Trends.** Edited by DANIEL E. CASEY and A. VIBEKE CHRISTENSEN. Berlin: Springer-Verlag. 1988. 212 pp. DM128.

This book is based on a symposium held in Denmark in 1987 which aimed to assess the present state of knowledge in psychopharmacology. The contributors are international and eminent, with a preponderance of Scandinavians. The largest section is on schizophrenia, with smaller ones on affective disorders, anxiety, and dementia. Contributions vary in nature from well-referenced and informative reviews down to subjective overviews, and topics range from basic pharmacology to clinical management.

The section on schizophrenia has useful short reviews of acute and long-term neuroleptic treatment and side-effects, including tardive dyskinesia. It is striking that our knowledge of even basic issues such as optimum

dosage and time course of response is incomplete. Other more pharmacological reviews focus on receptor effects and pharmacokinetics of neuroleptics, and future research strategies for finding new antipsychotic drugs.

More disappointing is the section on affective disorders. Important current areas of interest such as the new antidepressants, the use of anticonvulsants, and receptor changes during chronic antidepressant treatment are mentioned only in passing. There are adequate, although limited, reviews of the management of treatment-resistant depression, the long-term treatment of unipolar depression, and the new monoamine oxidase inhibitors, but other contributions are less interesting.

The long-term treatment of anxiety is discussed with particular reference to problems with benzodiazepines, but lack of space sadly precludes discussion of other advances in the pharmacotherapy of anxiety, such as the use of antidepressants. New directions in the search for a drug treatment of dementia are discussed in two chapters.

The psychopharmacologist would be interested in leafing through this book, but would not be significantly disadvantaged by missing it. The general psychiatrist wanting a broad overview of advances in psychopharmacology could more profitably look elsewhere. Although there are several exceptional chapters, the book overall adds little to existing literature and is probably not a worthwhile purchase for the general psychiatric library.

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**Family Therapy in the Community.** By DUNCAN MACPHAIL. Oxford: Heinemann. 1988. 192 pp. £9.95.

I welcomed a basic family therapy book written by a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) for CPNs. We have had CPNs in our clinic for some years, and they read this book too before I did the review. The author starts by saying that he is writing a practical manual rather than a theoretical text. However, there was a sense of rushing through the theory at the beginning, which does not develop a sound theoretical base on which to develop practice, and might be more confusing for a beginner than a slower paced look at the basic theory.

There are some well set-out exercises at the end of each chapter to consolidate what has been read, and a reading list on the chapter. Much of the rest of the book is based on clinical examples, which sometimes seemed an idiosyncratically chosen mixture, and it is here that the difference between nurses based in clinics as part of teams and nurses based in clinics as part of teams and nurses attached to general practitioners' surgeries begin to become more apparent.