

Reviews

Families Caring for People Diagnosed as Mentally Ill. By Christina Perring, Julia Twigg and Karl Atkin. London: HMSO. 1990. Pp. 62. £5.30.

Caring for persons with chronic mental disorders in the community has been viewed from two distinctive perspectives: first, from the perspective of the carers and the stresses imposed upon their lives; secondly from the perspective of the sufferers and the stresses imposed on their lives by the carers. The concept of family burden deals with the former, while that of expressed emotion addresses the latter issue. Few studies have adequately addressed the crucial interaction between these two opposing viewpoints. Even fewer have accounted for the impact of life events and persisting stress associated with social deprivation on the burdens of illness and caregiving. Finally, only one study has addressed all these issues and has successfully provided a comprehensive family-based intervention programme that deals with all these sources of stress with a combination of patient and family education, case management, 24-hour-a-day crisis intervention, patient and family stress management, and specific psychological strategies for specific problems of both patient and family members.

This publication purports to take an authoritative review of family care. However, it merely addresses the issue of carer burden, and fails to deal with the complexities of this issue. Taking this tack inevitably draws attention to the negative aspects of caregiving and fails to recognise the reciprocity of caring relationships that, despite inevitable emotional distress, is considered a rewarding experience for the majority of carers. Indeed, this review supports the finding that in all studies that have provided families with the alternative of continuing to care for their disabled relatives or have them cared for in mental hospitals, only a tiny proportion have opted for the hospital alternative. However, where services are deficient (most surveys) relatively clearly express reasonable needs that can be readily met by cost-effective methods of family-based care. It is scandalous that despite repeated research demonstration of the benefits of comprehensive case management involving carers as well as sufferers, a nationally-funded health service has not yet adopted such methods on a widespread basis, whereas any minor advance in drug therapy receives massive promotional support funded directly by NHS patients to commercial interests (i.e. 10% of the drug bill).

Despite these limitations, this book makes interesting reading for all those concerned with developing effective services for the mentally disordered.

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Directions for the 1990s: A Variety of Perspectives. GPMH. 1990. Good Practices in Mental Health, 380–384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU. Pp. 31. £3.95.

This slim volume is a collection of seven papers from a conference held in October 1989 to discuss the implications of the Government's proposals for mental health care, then known only through leaks and somewhat cryptic ministerial statements. The succeeding 12 months have seen the publication of the community care White Paper *Caring for People* and a sheaf of draft implementation documents and the passage through Parliament of the NHS and Community Care Act (1990). The initial extraordinarily tight timescale for the full implementation of the proposals has also been slipped from April 1991 to April 1993.

Throughout the country managers and service providers have had to accommodate to some new realities. The 'contract culture' is now beginning to take root, although its organisational implications are still seen only dimly by most people working within the services. The requirement set out in *Caring for People* on social services authorities to produce community care plans in consultation with health authorities, family practitioner committees (sic), housing authorities, private and voluntary sector providers, service users and carers has prompted even the most recalcitrant health and social services authorities to begin a dialogue.

Given that all the participants in community care for the mentally ill are on a steep learning curve, is there anything in these papers of lasting interest? A variety of perspectives are promised, and some predictable responses are delivered. An NHS manager (Chris Born) expresses concern over the proposed transfer of responsibility from NHS to local authority, while enthusiastically adopting the purchaser/provider divide and case management. A social services director (W. B. Harbert) worries about the apparent influence of the Royal College of

Psychiatrists and is healthily sceptical of the Government's intentions towards local authorities. A representative of the consumers (Peter Campbell) notes sourly that, despite the consumerist rhetoric of *Caring for People*, service users played no part in shaping the proposals. ("Neither did we", the professionals might add.)

Taken as a whole, these contributions are too anecdotal and rooted in the specific experiences of the authors to allow us to learn a great deal about how to tackle the challenges that *Caring for People* and its implementation present. However there are some useful nuggets of information to be gleaned. Ron Thompson, discussing the role of housing consortia, makes an important but obvious point (which took me three hard years as someone involved in the

reprovision of a declining mental hospital to learn) that services catering for the historic 'old long stay' may not be of much use to people newly accumulating within psychiatric services. The most interesting paper (by Kathy Johnson) describes what has been achieved in the Medway Area of Kent, where joint service planning and management have become a practical reality and monies flow productively and without rancour from the health to the local authority. If only we could all find such apparently successful ways of joint working!

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Forthcoming events

International Psychogeriatric Association: a Regional Meeting will be held in Cambridge from 2–5 April 1991 with symposia on epidemiology and treatment issues in the functional psychoses and the dementias, and on new directions in psychogeriatric research. Plenary lectures by Prof. Alwyn Lishman (History of Scientific Enquiry in Psychogeriatrics) and Sir Martin Roth (New Perspectives in the Study of the Dementias). Applications invited for free communications and posters. Residential accommodation available (numbers limited to 130). Social programme in and around Cambridge including Reception and Conference Banquet at Trinity College. Application (and abstract) forms: Mrs Anne Cook, Secretary to Sir Martin Roth, 41 Highsett, Hills Road, Cambridge CB2 1NZ (telephone 0223 63128; fax 0223 467331).

One-year day-release Forensic Psychotherapy Course will be held by the British Postgraduate Medical Federation (University of London) in association with the Portman Clinic. Next course begins October 1991. Details and application forms: Education Department, BPF, 33 Millman Street, London WC1N 3EJ (telephone 071 831 6222, extension 155; fax 071 831 7599).

The Tavistock Clinic will be holding a part-time course of six weekly sessions on **Understanding the Management of Perinatal Bereavement** on 23 and 30 January; 6, 20 and 27 February and 6 March 1991. A new course is held each term with a follow-up in the next term. Fees: £70, including a registration fee of

£10. Application forms: The Training Administrator, The Tavistock Clinic, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA.

The Research Committee of the British Psychoanalytical Society announces the 3rd Annual Lecture on 'Research in Psychoanalysis' to be given by Dr Daniel Stern, Professor of Psychology, University of Geneva; Professor of Psychiatry, Cornell University, New York (author of *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*) speaking on **Research into Mother-Infant Interaction – the Infant's Construction of Psychic Reality** at the Edward Lewis Theatre, Windeyer Building, 46 Cleveland Street, London W1P 6DB on 5 December 1990 at 8.15 pm. Admission is free.

The European Society for Mental Health and Deafness will be holding the **Second International Congress on Mental Health and Deafness** in Namur, Belgium from 9–11 May 1991. Further information: Congress Secretariat, Avenue Vauban 8, B-5000 Namur, Belgium (telephone 32 81 22 52 55; fax 32 18 23 14 45).

The **Xth International Symposium for the Psychotherapy of Schizophrenia** will be held in Stockholm from 11–15 August 1991. Last date for Abstract: 1 March 1991; last date for lower registration fee: 1 May 1991; last date for hotel reservation: 15 June 1991. Further information: Stockholm Convention Bureau, PO Box 6911, S-102 39 Stockholm, Sweden.