Book reviews

**How We Treat the Sick: Neglect and Abuse in Our Health Services**

Michael Mandelstam
Jessica Kingsley Publishers
384pp | £18.99
ISBN: 9781849051606

THE NUMEROUS failures in health care that the media have reported recently come as no surprise to Michael Mandelstam. He discusses the steady decline in care, especially of older people, in the NHS and in the independent sector.

The book is filled with shocking detail from public enquiries, coroners’ reports, court judgements and statements from patients and relatives.

Mandelstam offers a damning indictment of all the investigative agencies, which have had complacency and meaningless targets forced on them by successive governments. The author supports every assertion with clear evidence, but concedes that not all care is poor and that there are examples of excellence to be found.

This book should be required reading for anyone with influence over health care provision, from the prime minister and health secretary down to every care worker.

Read it and shed tears of shame and despair – and then, for heaven’s sake, take action.

Bashyr Aziz is senior teaching fellow, Warwick Medical School

**Mentoring and Supervision in Healthcare**

Neil Gopee
Sage Publications
£22.99 | 304pp
ISBN: 9780857024190

THIS VOLUME is an excellent resource for experienced and new mentors and preceptors, with Neil Gopee setting out the knowledge base, skills and attitudes for successful mentoring. This second edition encompasses developments in health care and the recent standards and competencies that have been introduced for mentors and supervisors, with advice on how to implement them in clinical practice.

There are interactive segments to support the application of the theories and principles discussed in a range of clinical settings.

Gopee also examines learning styles and learning environments; enabling learning for students with special educational needs; evidence-based care; principles of assessment; signing-off proficiency; triennial review; mentor leadership; and how to evaluate teaching.

He uses case studies that link to life in clinical practice and highlights the challenges that may occur. He also provides frameworks for mentoring in practice and encourages the reader with thinking points, through the application of theory to practice.

This book is a must for mentor preparation courses. It supports learning and ongoing professional development to enhance mentoring skills for all healthcare professionals.

Bev Al-Azzawi is a practice development nurse at Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust

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**Susan Williams**

Care of older people is a global challenge

THE FUNDING and quality of care of older people is not an issue just in the UK. It is exercising many countries across the globe, including Australia, where an independent ‘productivity commission’ has just reported to the national government there.

The report, Caring for Older Australians (Productivity Commission 2011), includes interesting proposals, mirroring the current debate in England. It makes several recommendations to promote the independence of older Australians, give greater choice and ensure equity and quality of care.

Controversially, Australia would move away from a system in which care costs are covered, regardless of individuals’ ability to pay. Instead, accommodation and living expenses would be covered by the older person in question, and there would be a subsidy for health costs and personal care that would be means tested with a lifetime limit.

To address variable quality, a new regulatory framework would be introduced through an Australian Aged Care Commission, which would also set ‘efficient’ prices.

Responses from older people’s groups and others have generally been positive. However, although the report acknowledges that coverage and quality varies, partly because of workforce shortages and low wages, the Australian Nurses Federation (ANF) is concerned that no practical recommendations have been made to address these concerns.

Nursing staff in the older people’s care sector are paid significantly less than nurses working in public hospitals, and the ANF estimates a shortfall of more than 20,000 nurses in this sector. The federation’s Because We Care campaign continues to push the government for greater financial investment in the service, in addition to the reforms.

Susan Williams is senior international adviser at the RCN

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