reviews

A Guide to the Spiritual Dimension of Care for People with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia
Eileen Shamy
Jessica Kingsley Publishing
176pp
£16.95
ISBN 1843101297

This book takes understanding and empathy a step further than hitherto. People with dementia remain spiritual beings to the last and Eileen Shamy offers an accessible mixture of theories and personal experience (her mother had Alzheimer’s disease) to offer support and guidance.

As a former Methodist minister Shamy ensures that Christian teachings feature strongly in the book but acknowledges that the issues are the same for all faiths and for ‘those who find the source of nourishment for their spirit from outside formal faith systems’.

The author recognises the trauma of watching a loved one change and cautions us not to ‘judge harshly those caregivers who find their role distasteful’. She also asks care home staff not to assume that visiting clergy will understand. They need as much help as anybody else to look beyond the obvious so that they can learn to ‘nurture the person’.

This is a very practical book, offering ways, both Christian and secular, in which we can help people with dementia to keep in touch with their spiritual beings. Whatever spirituality means for the reader, he or she will find something here to help in the quest to support each individual living with dementia, or their families. A recommended read.

Ruth Sander RN, MSc, PGCE

Intermediate Care – What Do We Know About Older People’s Experiences?
Alison Petch
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
37pp
£6.95
ISBN 1859351301

Rather than exploring older people’s experiences in any breadth or depth, this book highlights the lack of existing research into their experiences of intermediate care services. It provides a comprehensive explanation of the development of intermediate care and how it fits into the government’s policy agenda for older people, and offers models of intermediate care services, which either prevent acute hospital admission or help timely discharges.

Although quotes from older people are used in the text it would have been interesting to know more about them: whether, for example, they are current or past users of intermediate care services. The importance of involving older people in developing services is reinforced throughout, however, including the suggestion that admission avoidance and early discharge may not be the choice of all older people.

Three national research projects commissioned by the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council are alluded to, which will report this year and include the views of older people. They will either provide the insight needed or identify a need for further research into older people’s experiences.

This publication is useful in that it provides an overview of intermediate care, which is not always clearly understood, rather than a strong focus on older people’s experiences.

Mary Clay RGN, RM, MSc, PGCEA

Geriatrics at Your Fingertips
(Fifth edition)
David B Reuben et al
Blackwell
264pp
£9.75
ISBN 140510337X

This may be a book about geriatrics but it is not a book for geriatrics (or older people as we now prefer to call them). The font size is tiny and, given that reduction in vision with age is almost inevitable, this book is clearly designed for young doctors. The format is tiny and the information is crammed in so that the organisation of the text is not clear.

The main text is divided into 34 sections, followed by an appendix of assessment instruments for use with older people. The extent to which the sections are prefaced with information about their content is variable. The section on depression begins with a note on the problems of its detection late in life but the section on pain does not discuss loss of pain acuity with age. All of the sections finish with a table of prescribing information, however, which is vital in older people whose renal function may be reduced or impaired.

The book is clearly intended for physicians and it is hard to discern its use for any other group. The existence of this fifth edition suggests that this is a successful title but, like others, I will be unable to benefit from it unless the font size is increased!

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