Hebridean Heroines

This book provides an interesting historical insight into district nursing in the Western Isles of Scotland from the 1940s to the 1970s. It was developed from a thesis where interviews were undertaken with retired district nurses who had been employed in the Outer Hebrides. What emerges is the wide scope of the nurses’ practice, their significant relationships and their role’s unique nature. The participants illuminate the challenges and joys of the resilient district nurses and their working conditions.


Reviewed by Heather Bain, senior lecturer in postgraduate and continuing professional development education, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen

Soft Law and Global Health Problems

This important book, which draws on a vast number of resources, would be suitable for nurses with an interest in international development or studying global health policy.

It opens with the story of a woman in Uganda with AIDS who is unable to get the money to access treatment and dies painfully, aged 33. Her death, despite drugs being available that could have helped her, begins a discussion around inequalities in healthcare provision.

Author Sharifah Sekalala focuses on the millions of people affected by AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This book considers how hard laws, which are binding legal instruments such as the trade-related aspects of intellectual property agreements and prioritise patent rights, have made access to drugs cost-prohibitive for many who need them, particularly in developing countries.

Soft law approaches, not normally legally binding, can be easier for counties to adopt and reach agreement on, and are more flexible. The author argues this is important in public health pandemics, and that lessons can be learned from the approaches taken with malaria and tuberculosis. Although in favour of soft law approaches to addressing global health problems, the author gives a detailed description of both approaches. She explores lawmaking on global health and analyses the viability of global health financing trends within organisations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization.


Reviewed by Sue Campbell, associate lecturer, Open University

Treating Body and Soul – A Clinicians’ Guide to Supporting the Physical, Mental and Spiritual Needs of Their Patients

It took a while to get past the title and into the substance of this book. The use of ‘treating’ and ‘their’, in relation to spirituality, suggests an outmoded paradigm, with the clinician doing something ‘to’ the patient. There’s not a lot about mental and physical needs; the emphasis is on the spiritual.

The editor suggests there is no definition of spirituality. Actually, there are many, which is part of the problem. However, he has gathered together 11 opinion pieces from various healthcare professionals, apart from his own, and the range included is helpful.

While the stories can be interesting, most lack supporting evidence to help those arguing for the integration of spirituality into healthcare. Each chapter illuminates how the contributor is feeling their way into a contentious subject and is as much about their own story as any proposals for patient care.


Reviewed by the Rev Stephen Wright, chair of the Sacred Space Foundation, Cumbria

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