

LAW AND ETHICS IN THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHIATRY, edited by Charles K. Hofling, MD, Brunner-Mazel Publishers, New York, 1980.

Reviewed by Robert L. Sadoff, MD

Produced by the American College of Psychiatrists and edited by the late Dr. Hofling, this compendium of chapters is well written and quite readable. Each chapter was prepared by an eminently qualified member of the college and the total of the book focuses clearly on the issues of ethics in the practice of psychiatry. Medical-legal as well as ethical issues are also stressed.

This book is divided into four major sections. The first focuses on historical perspectives of law and mental health, highlighting the recent changes in the system. Ethics within the profession of psychiatry is integrated throughout the historical development.

The second major section is composed of clinical issues, dealing primarily with privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, disclosure of information and the recent "duty to warn" under the Tarasoff ruling.

The third major section presents the psychiatrist as an expert witness. One chapter in this section is a reproduction of a demonstration trial held at the annual meeting of the American College of Psychiatrists.

The final section, entitled **Ethical Issues**, contains chapters discussing the responsibilities of psychiatrists to society and the responsibility of psychiatry as a profession to society.

The book is well balanced from an academic philosophical point of view to the practical approach of the psychiatrist working within the legal system. The chapters are well presented by highly qualified individuals who have worked extensively in the field of legal psychiatry and medical ethics.

It appears that the one glaring omission, which perhaps was purposeful, is the absence of a discussion of malpractice issues in psychiatry. The factors influencing malpractice are implicit in the discussion of medical ethics in psychiatry, but are not clearly delineated in a separate chapter or highlighted in discussions by the several authors. Malpractice has become an increasingly important issue in psychiatry and certainly involves the question of ethics. It seems to me the application of ethical principles to the practice of psychiatry must include a more elaborate discussion of the malpractice problems than is presented. There are other texts focusing on psychiatric malpractice and I am certain this book was not intended to supplement the malpractice library; however, a chapter combining both law and ethics in the practice of psychiatry would be a welcome addition to this otherwise comprehensive presentation. The issue is touched upon briefly in the last two chapters, but they focus primarily on general ethical principles rather than specific practical applications.

In summary, this is an extremely important book for forensic psychiatrists to read. The contributions are significant and are well written by leaders in the field of law and psychiatry. The book is valuable and should be included in the library of all serious students of psychiatry and the law. □