

this book is a fine aid to differential diagnosis in the hands of experienced physicians. Despite the flaws that will perforce be present in a heroic effort such as this handbook, I still recommend its purchase.

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LAW AND THE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS. Edited by Walter E. Barton and Charlotte J. Sanborn. International Universities Press. 1978. \$15.00.

It is difficult to write a review about a book that is consistently sound and delivers what it promises. This is particularly so when the reviewer is characterologically of a critical bent and has had the "benefit" of a traditional medical education that places the emphasis on what is wrong and relatively ignores what is right. This has been a difficult review to write.

The Preface aptly sets the stage for the essays that follow. The list of authors contains the names of many mental health and legal professionals who have been and remain in the vanguard of American interdisciplinary progress. They tackle their subjects succinctly and effectively.

Part I considers the impact of recent judicial decisions on the practice of psychiatry from two vantage points. Bruce Ennis argues on behalf of the rights of the individual while Sigmond Lebensohn focuses on the disruptive and potentially harmful effects of "patients' rights" upon patients and practitioners. They are both correct, of course, from their perspectives, highlighting the complexity of the issues.

Parts II and III analyze the issues of informed consent and malpractice, with articulate expositions of the problem followed by imaginative suggestions for the foreseeable future. Part IV struggles with confidentiality, with Maurice Grossman asserting the dangers of its erosion, while John Donnelly takes a pragmatic approach.

Part V provides readily digestible historical and didactic discussions of the traditional topics of competence and responsibility. Nothing new is added — a fact which is not necessarily the authors' fault, but is rather an affirmation that these relatively unimportant subjects have become sterile. The new criteria for involuntary commitment, in the light of patients' rights, are most adequately covered in Part IV.

The basic message in this collection of professional and sophisticated papers is that the practice of medicine (and mental health in particular) has undergone a radical transformation in our recent past. As a result the therapist's role and the therapist-patient relationship have to be redefined. As with most revolutions, developments are not necessarily planned or coordinated, and so we find ourselves in the midst of flux and at times confusion. All indications point to the situation's becoming more rather than less complex, and the offerings in this book provide an excellent assessment of where we are and a likely perspective of things to come.

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