

BOOK REVIEWS

CLINICAL HANDBOOK OF PSYCHIATRY AND THE LAW. By Thomas G. Gutheil, MD and Paul S. Appelbaum, MD. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982. 381 pages.

Reviewed by William H. Reid, MD, MPH

When the *Bulletin* review copy of Gutheil's and Appelbaum's *Clinical Handbook* arrived I exercised the prerogative of the Book Review Editor to review — and keep — this widely heralded volume. I was not disappointed and have already recommended it to libraries and house officers. The book is generally good, often innovative (in the use of "Action Guides" for example), and sometimes excellent in its discussion of many of the interfaces of psychiatry and law.

An author's *Preface* sets the tone for the text that follows. It notes the lack of comprehensiveness of the content and explains the sectional format followed in each chapter. The former is a bit unfortunate, since the book's title implies completeness. The latter sounds like a fine idea and does work for the most part, but such a structured format sometimes becomes unwieldy as the content of the chapters varies. The outlines at the beginning of each chapter are very helpful. The "Action Guides," while stimulating the user's planning process, contain italicized words that often seem to be highlighted only because of their position at the beginning of a sentence, not for any clinical value.

The chapters themselves are few — eight for 370 pages of text — and are generally very good. There is an unevenness that I think reflects conceptual differences among the topics chosen. The chapters addressing specific subjects (for example, "Malpractice and Other Forms of Liability," "Competency and Guardianship," "Forensic Evaluations") are excellent in content, complete, and easy to use. Those that address more amorphous topics ("Legal Issues in Emergency Psychiatry," "Legal Issues in In-Patient Psychiatry") are much less structured or complete, often apparently lapsing into the authors' personal areas of clinical or ethical interest at the expense of objectivity. The authors' focus on the legally defensive preparation of the medical record, with little attention to the true communicative purpose of the patient's chart, is an example. In these chapters the blend of psychiatry and law becomes a confusing set of juxtapositions that rapidly shift among legal, quasi-legal, medical, psychodynamic, and moral viewpoints.

"Clinicians and Lawyers" was a welcome chapter. It and "The Clinician in Court," provide a wealth of information about the nuts and bolts of both professional forensic work and the experiences that might be expected

by the general psychiatrist. They explain the various positions of agency that often must be taken and unapologetically support the clinician in his or her tasks.

I should have liked a more complete discussion of some topics, such as guilty-but-mentally-ill verdicts and the controversy over pre-arraignment evaluations. Some others were more notably absent, for example correctional psychiatry and the work of the psychiatrist who is an employee of some police agency. Another point of mild concern, perhaps only to this reviewer, was an irritating, random use of both male and female "universal" pronouns from paragraph to paragraph. The universal "masculine," or at least the common (although unwieldy) "his/her," would have been preferable and correct.

It may be impossible to write a basic text that is equally useful to general psychiatrists, clinical trainees, and attorneys. While this is a stated purpose of *Clinical Handbook of Psychiatry and the Law*, I suspect its best use will be for the general psychiatrist or resident. When it is good it is very, very good; when it is not it is thought provoking. □

BIOETHICS — A GUIDE TO INFORMATION SOURCES. Edited by Doris Mueller Goldstein. Volume 8, Health Affairs Information Guide Series. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1982. ISBN 0-8103-1502-5. \$38.

DICTIONARY OF MEDICAL ETHICS. (New Revised Edition). A.S. Duncan, G.R. Dunstan, and R.B. Welbourn. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8245-0038-5. \$24.50.

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Bioethics – A Guide to Information Sources and *Dictionary of Medical Ethics* represent two among the many current resource texts available to meet health professionals' and educators' demands for immediate, condensed, accurate information about bioethics. *Bioethics – A Guide to Information Sources* is an annotated bibliography covering approximately 1,000 articles and documents in bioethics. The resources of the Bioethics Library of the Kennedy Institute were used to compile the guide to articles dating from 1973 to 1980. The *Dictionary of Medical Ethics* lists by topic alphabetically a wide variety of bioethical issues, cases, decisions, and procedures that may potentially concern the health care professional. For each entry a brief review and description of the problem is given by an expert in the appropriate field. Among the topics covered in both books are such current issues as codes of ethics, the professional-patient relationship,