

Book Reviews

castigating their scandalous misconduct. There is little news value in the conscientious devotion of men forced to decide how the few available doses can be used to cure and at the same time add to the, as yet tiny, store of knowledge about how best to use the drug. Nor are there thanks for ranking the many claims, most of which cannot be met until the means of production have been created and the trickle of supply turns into the desired flood.

The introduction of penicillin to the United States generated all these hazards. In the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, to restrain individual rights to acquire a life-saving remedy was anathema, and the problems of fair and beneficial distribution were particularly onerous. They were met with great courage and coolness by responsible doctors and committees which appointed and backed them. Doctor Adams has compiled a detailed and well documented account of the crucial years, and of the implications when similar situations occur again.

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PAT HOLDEN and JENNY LITTLEWOOD (eds), *Anthropology and nursing*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. x, 228, £10.99 (paperback, 0-415-04881-8).

Growing out of a 1986 workshop convened by Holden and Littlewood for the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women, Queen Elizabeth House, this edited collection "deliberately sets out to be an anthropology of nursing rather than an anthropology for nurses" (p. 1). This broadly oriented and fascinating collection, which includes historical, ethnographic, and theoretical papers, enriches our understanding of the nursing profession as only perceptive outsiders—social scientists and historians—can do. Several authors are also nurses, which enriches the anthropological perspective they emphasize here.

The first five chapters are strongly historical, examining nursing in ancient Greece and India, and from the last century in India, Japan and Uganda. The next six chapters focus on issues and themes that characterize the role and practice of nurses: social organization and identity among hospital domestics, gender and professionalism, nursing's response to human abuse, ritual psychopathology in nurses, and symbolic analysis of nurses' ambiguous role and care functions. This is a mixed bag of issues, types and levels of analysis, and writing styles, which is typical of an edited collection. It includes historical text analysis, ethnographic description, feminist research, ethnopsychiatry, and structural and symbolic analysis. The editors have seemingly avoided interfering with content but ensured that contributions are substantive, well written and well documented.

Within the enlightening heterogeneity of the contributions, there are a number of common themes, such as the influence of gender on the role and functioning of nurses in many health care systems, ancient, recent and current. Another theme is that nursing is influenced by having to deal on a daily basis with "dirt" or "pollution," which reflects and influences care, role, and status. For example, Hart describes how British hospital domestics distinguish between those who do "tops" work (clean dirt, e.g., patient sinks, changing water) and "bottoms" work (dirty dirt, e.g., floors, lavatories). Hendry and Martinez show that the cultural context within which Japanese nursing operates strongly distinguishes between "inside", in which close interpersonal relations are symbolized by sharing a saki cup (literally sharing germs), and "outside," from which one needs purification from even distant contact with others before entering the house. Somjee shows the influence of India's social organization with its rigid ideas about pollution on the nursing role and recruitment. Littlewood's thoughtful paper uses a symbolic analysis of the nurse as a mediator of pollution and how it creates part of the ambiguity of nursing care.

Overall, this is a welcome addition to the social science literature on the profession of nursing. Each chapter is interesting in itself, and together, they present a complex and fascinating picture, painted with a broad brush, of historical, cultural, social, and psychological influences on nursing in the past and present.

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