

Reviews

Home or Away. Edited by Elaine Murphy. National Unit for Psychiatric Research and Development. (Lewisham Hospital, London SE13). 1988. Pp. 74. £4.00.

This useful little book reports on a conference on Home Support Schemes for frail elderly people held in 1986. It focused on two particular examples: the Kent Community Care Scheme and the lesser-known but more specifically 'psychogeriatric' Guy's/Age Concern Project in Newham and Ipswich. The delegates to the conference comprised a wealth of experience in this general field and their main conclusions are drawn together by the editor, Elaine Murphy. Although there is a laudable emphasis on evaluation, the book demonstrates most clearly how difficult that is; nevertheless the reader is able to glean many very useful practical details and lessons.

Much has, of course, been written about the Kent Community Care Scheme but David Challis and colleagues give a useful shorthand account of its operation at the work face. As two of his co-authors were responsible for a project to test its applicability in the rather different setting of Gateshead, they are well placed between them to tell the wood from the trees and to identify the key ingredients for those wishing to set up similar services in their own districts. As many will know, the basis of the scheme was to give social workers the opportunity to make flexible and imaginative use of a modest budget to harness potential neighbourhood support to enable a disabled person to continue at home despite circumstances which would traditionally have triggered plans for residential care. The authors stress the importance of careful assessment and selection of clients for the scheme and discriminating use of the repertoire of domiciliary input available. Flexibility is the key to recruitment and deployment of carers and there are useful hints on strategies for timing their intervention.

Clients of both the Kent and Gateshead schemes fared better than controls on ratings of well-being and in their lesser uptake of residential care; in Kent mortality rates were also lower. The authors discuss the minefield of costing this sort of scheme and admitted that even their own substantial data were insufficient. It did, however, show some short term saving to social and health services with the community care scheme. Perhaps more importantly they sought to identify the type of client for whom this programme seemed most cost effective. Prominent here was the physically and mentally very frail person with considerable existing informal support (which the scheme could then supplement) and the isolated

person of lower physical disability accentuated often by minor degrees of functional illness.

The Guy's/Age Concern project made available a similar range of supplementary Home Care to demented patients referred to the psychogeriatric services of Newham and Ipswich, using control groups from a matched part of each catchment area (in which the project was not operating). The wide range of disabilities (with many clients already beyond community care even at the point of referral) and small overall numbers made for an inconclusive comparison between the two groups in terms of survival at home or the cost of care. On the other hand, one could learn much from the practical details and case illustrations.

Many of these issues were clearly taken up in the discussion which was summarised in the final chapter. This looked at some of the key factors in effective joint planning and collaboration. Other topics discussed include the emerging generic community care worker, the importance of securing the support of GPs and the respective roles of geriatric, psychogeriatric and voluntary services.

For all its shortcomings, the Griffiths Report has signposted the direction we need to travel. This modestly priced book provides many hints for that journey.

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Neuropsychiatric Disease and AIDS (Based on a conference held at the Royal College of Physicians, London). 1988. Pp 36. £5 (UK); £7 or \$15 overseas.

This timely and interesting collection of short review papers forms the proceedings of a conference held at the Royal College of Physicians of London in October 1987. Professor Cawley's introduction highlights the rapid progress of the AIDS epidemic from an apparently outlandish fantasy to an important and growing cause of dementia and mortality in young adults, and the contribution of social and medical ignorance, prejudice and discrimination to the overwhelming problems faced by AIDS victims. Adler's review of the epidemiology of AIDS tempers the bleak statistic that 84% of diagnosed AIDS cases in the United States are already dead with the more optimistic evidence both that homosexual men in the