



could answer and those that an expert would struggle with is no mean feat. My marks on the four papers ranged from 77% to 82%. I am 4 years away from the MRCPsych Part II hurdle so, in my opinion, the papers seemed too easy, even though the pass mark will be raised because of the demise of negative marking. I asked some of my senior house officer colleagues to peruse the questions. They felt that the difficulty matched those seen at the recent MCQ paper in Autumn 2001.

The questions are unambiguous and seem fair but I do have a suspicion that they are too candidate-friendly. And £14.95 is not an inconsiderable sum for four MCQ papers. That said, there do not seem to be many such MCQ books around and you will probably get an ego boost from your score.

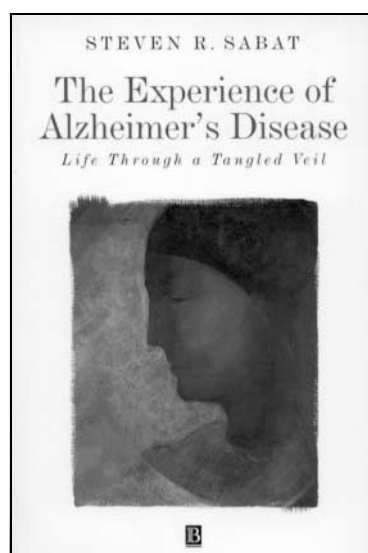
Navjot Ahluwalia

The Experience of Alzheimer's Disease: Life Through a Tangled Veil

By Steven R Sabat.

Oxford: Blackwell. 2001. 361 pp. £50.00 (hb) £16.99 (pb). ISBN: 0631266650 (hb); 0631216669 (pb)

'A middle aged man realises his father is ill. The man tells his son it is time to take his grandfather to the top of the mountain to die. Father and son sit the old man in a wheel chair and move him



slowly up the mountain top where they will push him over the edge so that he can speedily meet his death.'

Sabat has written a complex, thought-provoking book which aims to give some insight into the subjective experience of Alzheimer's disease. He has drawn on his research experience working with patients who have the disease, giving detailed transcriptions of their conversations with an analysis of the content. He places the conversations in context to provide understanding amid apparent fragmentary speech and incomprehensible behaviour.

Sabat gently challenges the scientific and mental model of how Alzheimer's

disease is identified and measured, in particular the traditional focus on deficit and pathology. He suggests there is value in individual experience rather than scientific averages without dismissing evidence-based medical principles. He invites a different viewpoint to reduce stigmatising and dysfunctional attitudes towards people with the disease. He asks us to focus on strengths not weaknesses, and to consider humanistic management rather than standard conventional 'palliative' care. He describes complicated philosophical, psychological and social construct theories to support his viewpoints. It is not a light read.

The book is interspersed with the voices of Alzheimer's disease patients and Sabat displays warmth, empathy and respect for the individuals described. The progression of their disease is clear through the narrative of the book and the outcome is no cliff-hanger. Ultimately, Sabat personalises Alzheimer's disease and confronts us with a need to change how we view people with the disease and how we can improve services to support them.

'Just as the man is about to push his father over the precipice his son calls out to him urgently, "don't let go of the wheelchair". The man turns to his son and asks for an explanation. His son tells him, "we are going to need it for you some day".'

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miscellany

Flexible working for doctors

The Flexible Careers Scheme (FCS) was developed as part of the Improving Working Lives for Doctors initiative. The scheme helps doctors maintain their careers by providing more centrally funded opportunities to work part time and have temporary career breaks. The Flexible Careers Scheme funds doctors

who are able to work up to 49% of full time. In each case the scheme is adapted to individual circumstances and provides sufficient medical/clinical practice for revalidation purposes. The scheme helps doctors in the training grades, career grade doctors, returners and doctors nearing retirement. Some of the benefits of the scheme include: central funding to pump-prime the creation of more flexible part-time

work arrangements including annualised hours and job shares; a fixed annual amount paid to the doctor to contribute towards professional expenses; access to the NHS pension scheme and to the same employment rights as other colleagues; and an exit strategy for moving on after being on the FCS. For further information or to apply to join, please contact NHS Professionals (Tel: 0845 60 60 345).