

Book reviews

Insights from sociology

Open Learning for Nurses (Behavioural Sciences Series). Continuing Nurse Education Programme 1991. ISBN 0 948910 12 7. Price £20.00.

Available from Continuing Nurse Education Programme, Barnet College, Russell Lane, Whetstone, London N20 0AX.

This book is written primarily for the newcomer to sociology who is pursuing a career in nursing. It offers a brief introductory overview of certain of the approaches within the subject, and includes a number of short accounts of ways in which sociologists have studied society. The language and style are simple, straightforward and refreshingly free from jargon.

Central among the themes considered are those of relevance to an understanding of the social context of health care. The first section, on the family and caring, explores social and economic factors which influence family life, and examines the function provided by the family in modern Britain. This leads neatly into the second section, in which the role of women and health care are considered, women being presented as the main providers of care both in the hospital and in the home setting. Section three briefly considers the part played by organisations and bureaucracies in health care provision. This is followed by a chapter showing the effects of powerful groups on health care, and the ways in which the power that doctors have derived from medical science has en-

abled them to extend their influence into areas of living not previously touched by medicine. Section five looks at illness behaviour and explores the different factors that people take into account before seeking help from lay or professional groups. The relationships between patients and health professionals are considered, and this theme is carried on into the final section with a closer look both at individual patient care and at nursing in the wider sense of team work and management.

While clearly and economically written, the book is not without its limitations and omissions. These are to some extent inevitable in an introductory text, but entire topics important to an understanding of the social context of health care have been omitted. Examples include social class, ethnicity, poverty, and unemployment, all of which have been shown to be significant factors in both the provision and the uptake of health care, affecting people's health and their chances of recovery. Furthermore, although the authors have fastened upon ideas which have particular relevance to nursing today, and which students will therefore be obliged to confront, I have reservations in respect of the somewhat cursory treatment which these ideas are accorded. The authors succeed in making the reader pause to think about central issues, and indeed specific encouragement to do so is provided in the shape of blank spaces in which personal responses may be entered, but the risk remains that the somewhat oversimplified approach will lead to a false impression of the complexity of the subject, and give the

student no inkling of the extent to which further investigation is required.

These reservations notwithstanding, the book offers a usefully succinct and straightforward introduction to basic themes in this important area of overlap between nursing and sociology.

Reviewed by **R Rundle**, Institute of Advanced Nursing Education.

Bibliography of nursing quality assurance and standards of care 1932 -1987

Kitson A & Harvey G. Harrow: Scutari, 1991 ISBN 1871364469. Price £24.95

This book is divided into four sections — background and general theory, nursing philosophy, quality assurance tools, and manpower (should this be human resources?)

In each section references are listed in chronological order of publication but this does not reflect the subject matter which is jumbled within the sections. Each reference is followed by an indicative abstract so the interested reader would still have to look up the original to find the results. There are nearly 500 such references followed by abstracts.

A major disadvantage of this book is that it already lacks developments after 1987 of great importance following the restructuring of the NHS. There are no references to newer concepts such as nursing audit or QUALY or the influential health economics value for money area.

Abstracts and references for more recent material would be found in data bases such as Medline and many libraries have this on CD-ROM. This book is really a chronological card index printed out and with modern technology is an outdated concept. It would have been more useful to produce informative and evaluative reviews on various quality assurance topics followed by references and including recent ideas.

There is no subject index making the book difficult to use for reference.

This book may be of interest to the historian but the price of £24.95 is high and would seem to be aimed at the library market.

Reviewed by **Paul Moorbatch**, Senior Librarian, St Bartholomew's College of Nursing & Midwifery, London.

Behavioural sciences for nurses: towards Project 2000

Evryl E Fisher. Duckworth, London, £19.95. 662 pages, illustrated.

In spite of its catch-all title and a jacket that promises to deliver everything a P2000 student would hope for from an academic textbook, 'a comprehensive summary of the main findings in the behavioural sciences', this ill-conceived text does nothing of the kind.

Evryl Fisher's voluminous textbook is now on bookshop shelves and it concerns me to think a student, new to the behavioural sciences and not well-placed to discriminate between one text and another, might be tempted