physical assessment and examination of the elderly patient, which would in Great Britain be more the province of the doctor than the nurse. In the same way there is far less than one would expect on purely nursing procedures like the management of bowel disorders and of pressure areas and sores. Surprisingly there is no section on senile dementia or on cerebrovascular disease and their day-to-day management.

The general impression is that this is a verbose book, which is probably of only limited interest to us in this country.

M. J. Clarke-Williams

_Hospice: A Caring Community_
Edited by Theodore H. Koff


St Christopher’s Hospice at Sydenham, London, opened in 1967. Its success and the inspiration of Dame Cicely Saunders has aroused world-wide interest in the care of patients suffering from advanced cancer, and of their families. In Britain this response has led to the establishment of some 50 units variously called Hospices, Continuing-care Units or Nursing Homes. Many of these have both in-patient beds and home care facilities. Others have one or other of them, and plan eventually to provide a complete service. In the USA, over 250 interested groups have emerged, but, so far, only some five units are in full operation. In Hospice—A Caring Community Theodore H. Koff and his collaborators, who are familiar with British experience in this field, argue the case for hospice care in the USA. They describe the origins, philosophy and practical problems of hospices, basing their views on the experience of New Haven Hospice, Connecticut and Hillhaven Hospice, Tucson, Arizona.

The book is essentially an account of present-day knowledge and practice. It gives sound advice on the problems to be surmounted in establishing a hospice in America. This is quite different from our experience in Britain, and the slow progress demonstrates how much more difficult it is. This is, in part, the result of a surplus of hospital beds in the USA, but the problems of finance are also critical. As a financial management consultant commented, ‘the trouble with hospice people is that they think non-profit’. Staff and their problems and administration organization are discussed at length. An appointment that might be widely used here is a ‘facilitator’ whose object is to ensure that all the arrangements for the patient function smoothly. A chapter is devoted to the needs and methods of evaluating the work of hospices. Finally, the point is made that much can be learned from hospice care that could humanize mainstream medicine. For readers in Britain this is a good account of the philosophy and practice of terminal care. It also gives interesting insights into transatlantic medicine from which we have much to learn, besides the fact that they too have a bureaucracy with which to contend.

Ronald Dent

_Care of the Dying_
Richard Lamerton


There have always been hospices in the sense of places where the poor, the aged, the sick, the helpless, the destitute and the lame are made welcome and are made as comfortable as possible; but the hospice movement, as we now use the term, gained much of its momentum in this country with the opening of St Christopher’s in 1967. Those working in related fields of medical practice will be familiar with the work of Dr Lamerton, who has been closely associated with this movement for many years, and will welcome this revised and expanded edition of his book which first appeared in 1973. Whether terminal care should be encouraged to expand as a specialty is debatable. In some ways it is comparable to geriatric medicine—perhaps the true aim should be to disseminate the gospel until all doctors in all branches of medical practice develop not only the technical skills but also the right attitudes to do it properly themselves. Those who find an attraction in this philosophy will also be attracted by this book: it is pitched at a level which is within the grasp of laymen but it bears an eloquent message for all relatives, volunteers, clergy and all health professionals who are likely to become involved in the care of dying persons. The author’s views on drugs and their correct use are expounded...
forcefully and convincingly, and doctors and nurses will learn a great deal about the relief, not only of pain, but also of many of the other distressing symptoms common in the terminal stages of disease. He is equally energetic in his alleviation of constipation, and geriatric physicians will heartily endorse his assumption that anyone who is receiving an opiate or derivative will be constipated. There is a well documented account of the work of the Macmillan domiciliary service for the dying, and this includes a useful discussion of the roles of the various members of the team. There is also an attempt to evaluate the result, a notoriously difficult task when the outcome is quantitatively uniform but qualitatively so variable. There follows a chapter on the euthanasia debate which summarizes admirably the case in favour of dying well and that against the deliberate termination of life, and which will be helpful to those of us sometimes asked to participate in these discussions. This chapter, like the rest of the book, is pervaded by the author's religious convictions, but even those who do not share them will find little to disagree with in the ethical code he propounds. A most humane section on talking to the dying is full of compassion and common sense, and there is an excellent bibliography. It is difficult to think of any group of people to whom this book would not be of great value and comfort.

N. K. CONI

__The Social Reality of Death__

Kathy Charmaz

This book is subtitled __Death in Contemporary America__ and represents the culmination of four years’ work by the author, during the course of which she seems to have conducted a large number of interviews with persons closely involved in their own deaths or those of their relatives, friends, patients or clients. The book is far from being a collection of case studies, however, and only a few comparatively brief extracts of these conversations are reported, together with several from other sources, much of the text being devoted to reviewing the American literature on the subject. In many ways this seems a pity, because much of this original material has a touching authenticity and fascination, particularly perhaps for readers on this side of the Atlantic.

Apart from that, it must be said that the book as a whole does not have much to offer to the medical reader in this country, particularly if he shares the reviewer’s prejudices concerning Marxism and sociological jargon. Ms Charmaz attempts to analyse at considerable length a number of approaches to the concept of death and its impact on both subject and survivors, mainly from a Marxist perspective. She is ambitious enough to examine death not only in a natural setting but also as encountered in warfare, suicide, murder and even judicial execution. Unfortunately, one is left with a reinforcement of the impression that sociology, as a science, is so ‘soft’ as to become totally intangible on close examination. It is possible to read lengthy tracts of prose from this volume and emerge with a kind of mental malabsorption syndrome, resulting in the assimilation of very little valuable information. The text is also replete with verbose and quasi-meaningful expressions which do not fall easily on English ears, and verbs such as to explicate, to posit, and to intuit abound.

The author is critical of the medical profession and of the private nursing home industry in her country, and here she is on the whole justified and admirably restrained. Geriatric physicians in Britain will be familiar with most of her observations in this field, and it is difficult to recommend the book to them, unless for the extensive and quite useful bibliography.

N. K. CONI

__Death Anxiety: The Loss of The Self__

James B. McCarthy

The purpose of this book by a psychoanalyst in private practice—apparently chiefly with children—in New York, is ‘to trace the expression of death anxiety in neurosis and to address the need for a heightened understanding of the inter-relationship between the fear of death, depression and separation conflicts in adjustment problems’. This is therefore not a book about death, but rather a psychoanalyst’s view of the shadow which death casts on life. The book is rich in literary and