BOOK REVIEWS

The Concept of Work Ability


Lennart Nordenfelt is an eminent Swedish philosopher who has devoted himself to research into the philosophy of medicine and health care. His book, supported by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, is in three parts. The first describes some of the methods and instruments that have been designed for evaluating work ability. The second goes on to describe an underpinning theoretical foundation for the analysis of work ability and the third relates work ability to medical conditions.

In 19 short chapters, he covers a huge range of material from current classifications of disability such as the International Classification of Functioning to current classifications of work and work ability and the analysis of disease and the theories behind the linking between health and disease. He discusses the content and approach of many European, largely Scandinavian, ways of assessing work ability and finds all wanting in one way or another. Diploma in Disability Assessment Medicine and Associate of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine candidates will find the first few chapters on disability definitions and classifications of great use as Nordenfelt presents a potentially dry subject in easy to read text. If a candidate can read the book from cover to cover, they will really develop an excellent understanding of the issues and challenges around disability assessment.

Further on into the book, the reading does become more difficult as it clearly comes from a philosophical angle that can be quite alien to a medical reader. Nonetheless, it is well worth persisting with if you have the time and interest in the topic of disability assessment or of work ability and vocational rehabilitation.

Overall, I think this book is one that occupational physicians should borrow and read and then buy if this is your sphere of interest.

Rating

★★★ (Borrow from the library)

Nerys Williams