

book reviews.

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**Book Review
Editor**

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CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL — THE PARENTS' VIEW

by Ann Halestooke,
reviewed by Alison Bonython.

Priory Press Limited. 1973. Pp.
160. \$7.50

In 1959 in Britain, a committee established by the Department of Health three years earlier, published a report, "The Welfare of Children in Hospital". It became known as the Platt Report, after the chairman, a distinguished surgeon, and was adopted by the Ministry of Health as official policy. The most important recommendations of the report, dealing with the care of children in hospital from a non-medical basis were: "(a) visiting to all children should be unrestricted, (b) provision should be made for the admission of mothers along with their children, especially when the child is under 5 years of age, and during the first few days in hospital; and (c) the training of medical and nursing students should be so organised as to give them a greater understanding of the emotional and social needs of children and their families." (p.142.) All hospitals were requested to implement the recommendations, but with the policy unenforced, little significant change occurred.

In 1961, what was later to become the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital was founded, to pursue these recommendations by persuading hospitals to adopt them, and by persuading parents to become involved in caring for their sick children. Their primary goal was the recognition of

"the mothering needs of all children in hospital". (p 147.)

Ann Hales-Tooke, a Governor of the United Cambridge Hospitals, and a teacher at a hospital for the subnormal, wrote the book under review in 1973, concerned that the Platt Report recommendations were "still largely ignored". (p. 30) In that same year, an Australian association was established, formed on the lines of the British one. They submitted "that emotional and mental needs are of at least equal importance to the physical welfare (of sick children), and that, particularly in the case of the very young children, parental involvement is essential". (From the submission by A.W.C.H. to the Interim committee on Hospital and Health Services Commission, 1973, p.2.)

Thesis

This is the thesis of Ann Hales-Tooke in her book, which stresses again and again the importance of these needs being met. She covers the special needs of each age group from birth to the teenage years, focusing on parental visiting and accommodation; the necessity of providing play and educational facilities; and above all the pressing task of parent and staff education on the needs of children in hospital, and the need for all involved to communicate and co-operate. The stages of separation formulated by J. Robertson which a child can experience, namely "protest, despair and, finally, denial" (p.27), are discussed thoughtfully.

Long Stay Hospitals

A chapter on long-stay hospitals underlines the desirability to create an environment as similar as possible to that of the family home, thereby meeting the greatest needs of a child who is separated from parents.

One of the most important and arousing chapters is entitled "What the Children Say". From a collection of short essays by primary

school children on the subject of Hospitals, it was found that "the word 'kind' is used — especially by the younger children — more than any other to describe what hospital is, or should be, like". (p.76.) Sub-headings in the chapter include Fear; Parting and Separation (the greatest fear); Enjoyment and Play; Food; Surroundings; and finally Children's Recommendations. The comments provide valuable insight into the need to provide for the total welfare of sick children.

When children die

A poignant chapter deals with "When children die", and emphasizes the need for communication, for allowing expression of feelings by the dying and the bereaved, and allowing close parent-child exchange.

A section of three chapters discusses guidelines for the preparation of children for a hospital stay, and preparation for an operation with specific reference to the most common one of tonsillectomy. Again, frank communication is urged to alleviate fear of the unknown.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the author calls for "a new underlying philosophy upon which the education and training of medical and nursing staff can be based". (p. 149.) She re-emphasizes that the "function of mothering should be understood and built into the training of all those who have the care of children in hospital". (p. 149) She suggests various physical changes to existing facilities and routine which would assist in creating the necessary environment.

But her book is "addressed primarily to parents" (p. 13), and from it they can learn much to prevent undue suffering of their sick children and themselves. The style is easy, the message straightforward. We still have a way to go, and this book provides a sound springboard.

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REVIEW STUDIES OF CITY YOUTH

by W.F. Connell, reviewed by
John Wilson, Youth Line Co-
ordinator, Melbourne.

Hicks Smith & Sons, Sydney, 1975.

This book attempts to gather information about the attitudes, behaviour patterns and personality characteristics of Australian teenagers living in an urban environment.

As such, it represents an important achievement, since research in this area has been scarce, fragmented and narrow.

Research sample

The research sample constituted 9,100 young people between the ages of 12 and 20, 8,000 of whom were still attending school. Written questionnaires and inventories were used for the in-school sample, and personal interviews which included a written questionnaire were used for the out-of-school sample.

As the sampling fraction for the out-of-school group was much smaller than for the in-school group, the two samples are analysed separately and reported in parallel throughout the book.

Rigorous efforts

Rigorous efforts were made to ensure that both samples reflected as accurately as possible the many sociological variables operating.

There are weaknesses in the sample, the most serious being too few 19-20 year old girls, only 10% of whom are married. However, the size and nature of the sample and the range of behavioural areas studied (personal esteem, values, interests, social pressures, social relationships, self perception, school and work) do provide a very comprehensive picture of Sydney youth at the time of the survey (1969/70).

Careful Research

The book represents a piece of very professional and careful research, the authors being extremely cautious in interpretation of data.

Perhaps its most important contribution lies in its reassessment of common 'myths' which surround the teenager and the teenage world.

The 'myth' of the 'generation gap', for example, comes under some criticism — "It is striking, in the light of this popular idea, to find how nicely the older generations' habits are matched in the end; how well the order of prohibitions in one generation matches the order in the other . . . A lot of things are successfully communicated, whether or not adults are aware of it." (pp 150).

Similarly, concepts of teenage sub-culture and personal instability are challenged as a result of the data collected.

In summary, this book represents a most competent piece of research in the area of adolescent thought and behaviour, and challenges many of our traditional assumptions about the teenage world.

John Wilson
Youth Line Co-ordinator, Melbourne.

