

stood as a parliamentary Labour candidate for Winchester on four occasions – well aware he was unlikely to be elected. Other organisations that benefited from his efforts were the Winchester Film Society and the local Housing Association. For more than 20 years he was a member

of the Society of Friends, where his input was greatly valued.

A unique, compassionate person, Bill is greatly missed. Contemplative and almost ascetic at times, he had a rich sense of humour and he loved good food or an evening in the pub. On leaving a

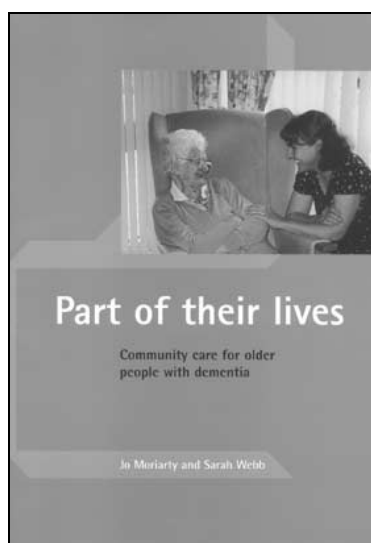
case conference with him, a colleague once remarked 'he's all altruism': there was more than a grain of truth in that comment.

Leslie Bartlet

reviews

Part of their Lives. Community Care for Older People with Dementia

By Jo Moriarty & Sarah Webb.
Bristol: The Policy Press. 2000.
118 pp. £14.99 (pb).
ISBN: 1-86134-217-9.



This book describes a follow-up study of a group of people with dementia who were referred to three social services departments in 1994–1995 and underwent assessment. The chapter dealing with difficulties in identifying people with dementia in a social services referral population touched a particularly raw nerve for me, as we have just joined a mental health partnership in Manchester where our partners (namely Manchester social services) are struggling to identify how much of their resource goes into supporting elderly people with mental illnesses. After reading this book I am less perplexed (but just as cynical) about why they cannot quantify their commitment.

One bugbear of mine is the lack of information held by staff in residential and nursing homes about those in their care. Often they can tell me virtually nothing about the family and life history of their residents. Small wonder then, that proxy informants in this study knew so little about residents with dementia and their past lives and that in many cases social class could not be assigned.

On a positive note, more carers were aware of the diagnosis of their relatives, and used terms such as Alzheimer's disease, than in previous studies. This suggests public awareness of dementia is increasing: perhaps a first step in the battle against stigma.

Few referred cases could be resolved quickly and closed: elders with dementia needed long-term support. I felt this was the single most important finding (simple and self-evident though it is). The authors argue that regular reviews of care packages are essential because the needs of people with dementia will increase over time. The more cynical reader might suspect that this explains the drive to close cases: reviews, which detect increasing needs, are inevitably going to lead to increasing costs, so let us not review people. Obvious really. I think that the findings reported here would benefit from widespread publicity: in particular "the long-term nature of the support that study participants and other people with dementia in similar circumstances require". Send a copy of this book to your counterparts in social services with the relevant bits highlighted!

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Improving the Care of People in Substance Misuse Services. Clinical Audit Project Examples.

By Kirsty Maclean Steel &
Claire Palmer. London: Gaskell.
2000. 50 pp. £15 (pb).
ISBN: 1-901242-46-3.

This short book, produced by the Clinical Governance Support Service at the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit, reports on 28 clinical audits carried out by a number of UK substance misuse services. Topic areas covered include patient assessment, aspects of clinical care such as shorter- and longer-term prescribing and hepatitis B vaccination, organisational and management processes, user satisfaction and outcome. Examples of self-assessment, peer group and external evaluation methods are

given, and both alcohol and drug misuse are covered.

The text provides some useful ideas for audit topics and methods, and is an early attempt at benchmarking standards. The reporting is well structured and easy to follow. Key messages for carrying out local audits, such as keeping things simple and not taking on too much, are sensible. The examples given of audits of hepatitis B vaccination programmes were particularly notable in this regard, and seem likely to have increased the quality of care given to intravenous drug users. However, the methods for choosing audit standards are not well explained or referenced, and their evidence-base therefore appears thin at times. This may, of course, reflect the state of the discipline. It would also be difficult to replicate some of the audit examples without well-developed peer-group audit structures already in place.

Readers will find this book helpful, perhaps as a clinically focused complement to the more organisationally based QuADS project manual produced by Drug Scope/Alcohol Concern. It may be that the national standards for drug and alcohol services that should be in place as part of the National Drugs Strategy by 2002 will eventually provide more salient audit standards than those provided in this text. However, this book will still remain useful in terms of auditing everyday practice, and staff in both statutory and voluntary sector drug and alcohol services should have access to it.

