
Book reviews

You're under Arrest. By SHEILA HOLLINS, ISOBEL CLARE and GLYNIS MURPHY. London: Gaskell. 1996. 72 pp. £10 (pb). ISBN 1-901242-01-3.

You're on Trial. By SHEILA HOLLINS, GLYNIS MURPHY and ISOBEL CLARE. London: Gaskell. 1996. 72 pp. £10 (pb). ISBN 1-901242-00-5.

These books in the Books Beyond Words series use pictures with optional supporting text to tell the story about what happens when a vulnerable adult is arrested, accused of a crime and has to go to court for a trial. Both books aim to assist vulnerable adults in understanding police and court procedures, the experience of being a suspect and the role of the appropriate adult. In *You're under Arrest* 28 pictures with optional text clearly tell the step-by-step story of a vulnerable man who is arrested and placed in custody in a police cell. Several legal procedures are explained by the pictures, supporting text and supplementary notes including the 'caution' and roles of the police custody officer, solicitor, appropriate adults, police doctor and mental health workers who visit police stations. The rights of vulnerable adults with learning disabilities or mental health needs are clearly and carefully explained and their likely communication, reading and writing problems are acknowledged. The possibility that arrested vulnerable adults may require medication, to see a doctor and to have access to these books are also covered. The options following arrest are illustrated i.e. no further action, police bail, formal caution, being charged and going to court. In *You're under Arrest* the vulnerable man is not charged and allowed to go home. The story concludes with him seeing a mental health worker to help him understand his experiences and to try and make sure he is not under arrest again.

The complementary book *You're on Trial* tells the story of a vulnerable man accused and charged of a crime who has to go to court for a trial. Using 33 pictures with optional text and explanatory notes the criminal justice system, police and court procedures are systematically and comprehensively demonstrated. The book covers police arrest, questioning and being charged, being allowed bail and initial attendance at a magistrates' court. The pictures and text succinctly explain the roles of defence and prosecution solicitors, the appropriate adult, custody officer, court usher, magistrates, probation officer and mental health worker. Applying for Legal Aid, entering a plea, being remanded in custody, listening to witnesses, taking the oath,

reaching a verdict, sentencing and various disposal options are briefly but clearly covered. In this story, the vulnerable man is found guilty and has to see a probation officer for a pre-sentence report. The book includes illustration or discussion of most sentencing options available to the magistrates' court including being sent to prison or a psychiatric hospital, being placed on a Section, Guardianship or Probation Order, being fined or required to do some community service, receiving a suspended sentence, conditional or absolute discharge, and having to see a mental health worker.

Some adults with mild learning disabilities could independently work through and understand several pictures in both books. However, most adults with learning disabilities will require support and prompting from appropriate professionals, support workers or carers to fully benefit from working through the books. The optional text and explanatory notes that can be used alongside the pictures will be particularly useful for those without personal first-hand experience of the criminal justice system with its many players and complex, often confusing, procedures. Thus, I envisage the books being used with adults with learning disabilities to both prepare and educate them about the criminal justice system, as well as to provide structured accessible support and information for those currently involved with the police and courts.

The authors and illustrator (Beth Webb) are to be commended for producing these much needed high quality and user-friendly books which will prove invaluable and enjoyable learning materials. Both these books should be made available and will prove extremely useful to adults with learning disabilities as well as those working with them in learning disabilities, mental health, social, police and court services. I recommend these books as essential reading and purchases for learning disabilities and mental health service workers.

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Depression in General Practice. By ANDRÉ TYLEE, ROBERT G. PRIEST and ANN ROBERTS. London: Martin Dunitz. 1996. 55 pp. £9.95. ISBN 1-85317-288-X.

This is a very useful guide to depressive illness – for patients! Unfortunately, this is not the target

audience but 'the busy general practitioner and other primary care team members' is. For this group of health professionals it is woefully lacking in substance and it is directed to the lowest common denominator of knowledge of depressive disorders. Indeed were the 'busy general practitioner and other primary care team members' to find this pocket book useful it would be an indictment of the current crop of primary health care professionals and would raise serious questions about their ability to deal with those suffering from these disorders at all.

The writers suggest memorising the DSM criteria for major depression – an exercise in procrustean dogma and remote from the clinical acumen which the skilled health professional utilises in making diagnosis. The differential diagnosis is considered in less than half a page and the authors do not mention, anywhere in the text, the distinction from adjustment disorders, the category probably most commonly seen in general practice, or the diagnostic confusion with anxiety disorders, again a frequent occurrence in the primary care setting. While the various antidepressant groups are listed along with their common side-effects the authors could have usefully provided assistance in choosing between one group and another or between different drugs in the same group, instead the authors choose to limit themselves to a broad descriptive sweep.

General practitioners constantly refer to the problems of compliance which they encounter among their patients once symptomatic improvement has been noticed. The authors of this book correctly recommend antidepressant treatment for 4–6 months but with no hints on how to encourage this.

The section on suicide risk assessment following an episode of parasuicide is the most useful contribution to the book and provides a useful strategy for interviewing the patient and for negotiating a management plan. A further positive aspect is the production of the text itself – the paper is nicely textured and the layout utilises highlighted tables lavishly. It is regrettable that the content is so shallow.

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Options for Improving Patient Care in Schizophrenia. Edited by HUGH FREEMAN. London: Royal Society of Medicine Press. 1996. 57 pp. £10. ISBN 1-85315-288-9.

This book in the Round Table Series sets out to review the current model of care and the

effectiveness of the service. Alarm bells are immediately set ringing by the fact that no social worker could be persuaded to take part in this critical review. The editor draws attention to the fact that this itself reflects the problematic role that social services play in mental health in most parts of the country.

This multi-disciplinary Round Table discussion makes a brave attempt to provide a comprehensive and balanced review of the current status. Certain uncomfortable facts are highlighted. The enormous burden placed on family, voluntary workers and general practitioners is sharply focused. A plea is made for the hospital to remain an essential part of the integrated package offered to patients and their families. The introduction of new medications, with particular reference to clozapine, is discussed. Several people emphasised the real cost of community care and the need to judge the newer and more expensive drugs in this context. The reality facing purchasing organisations with limited resources and the need to define clear treatment goals and prioritise treatment programmes is clearly reviewed.

The improvements brought by community care is acknowledged and particularly that this is frequently preferred by patients and their families. In this context the results of research showing an increasing burden on general practitioners, families and carers, coupled with a trend for community psychiatric nurses to involve themselves in the less seriously ill revealed important areas requiring urgent review and adequate resources.

At times this review is uncomfortable and thought provoking. This book can be recommended to all who care for those suffering from severe mental illness and are interested in building a research-based system of treatment and rehabilitation embracing an integrated multi-disciplinary approach.

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Child and Adolescent Services. Young People and Protective Legislation. Safeguards for Young Minds. Edited by R. WILLIAMS and R. WHITE. London: Gaskell. 1996. 122 pp. £10 (pb). ISBN 0-902-241-94-X.

The past 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in the legal complications affecting the work of child and adolescent psychiatrists. The provisions of the 1983 Mental Health Act include no minimum age limit, and its use is often an alternative to the Children Act 1989 when a child, or more probably an adolescent, is