

BOOK REVIEWS

Philosophy for Medicine: Applications in a clinical context.

Martyn, E. Pekka, L. Puusstinen, R. (Eds.)

ISBN 1 85775 943 5

Radcliffe Medical Press

This book introduces the subject of philosophical questions in medicine in a unique way. It follows the day in the life of a surgical registrar, who begins by cutting his thumb in the process of operating. It tracks the treatment pathway, reactions and involvement of others throughout the day.

It sets a scene to ask oneself – if you ever had a serious illness or accident how ‘the opening of your philosophical window’ is activated. Following each vignette of the process, are chapters on the philosophical ‘ups and downs’ of the encounters.

In many ways these chapters are a description of the core essentials of medicine in terms of the humanities: finding meaning in the human experience.

For example:

The first clinical encounter – assessment of the cut thumb

The personal guilt or shame – having to stop operating

Uncertainty in medicine – an artery has been cut – will I operate again?

Medicine as a moral enterprise – taking care of yourself as well as others

Although it has a ‘quirky’ way of explaining areas such as ethics and the historical implications of the changing face of medicine, it does not avoid discussing the theoretical underpinnings of these. Most of us would say that we made our everyday judgements intuitively without any deep contemplation of the philosophical question, and this is where the book is important, because it draws to our attention the greater meaning in seemingly simple encounters with others.

This would be a recommended read for all working in a medical setting, particularly as the approach for care today is of a multidisciplinary nature. It is up to all of us to understand and

examine the human condition from a patient’s point of view and for our own understanding of ourselves.

Kate Jones, lecturer in palliative care, Marie Curie Hospice Glasgow.

Healthcare Teaching

You don’t need to look far to realise there are many changes and initiatives in healthcare and medical education. Multidisciplinary education is becoming more common, medical education is moving towards a problem based approach and includes compulsory communication skills training. Those in palliative care who support students from all disciplines see the advantages of both multidisciplinary education and the change in the training of doctors: the inter-personal skills are considerably improved and the professions have more respect and understanding of each others roles.

Healthcare professionals and chaplains in particular are increasingly called on to provide input to training courses and educational programs for healthcare professionals. Chaplains know about spiritual care but where do we learn the skills of teaching and how do we demonstrate that we have competence? Two books have recently been published that that can help healthcare professionals develop and enhance their skills.

Teaching made easy: A manual for health professionals (2nd edition)

Mohanna K., Wall D., and Chambers R.

ISBN 1-85775-871-4

Radcliffe Medical Press

This is a comprehensive ‘manual’ that covers the whole arena of healthcare teaching and begins by setting the context of healthcare teaching, and a broad look at multi-professional education, continuing professional development, evidence based evaluation and life-long learning. The book also explores educational theory and concepts and presents them in a language that is easy to understand.

One of the most useful chapters is that on matching 'methods with message' which explores the different teaching methods and the advantages and pitfalls. Lectures, workshops, small groups, problem based learning and more are all explored. There's also a useful section on 'organising a course': what needs to be done and when. The chapter on 'giving feedback effectively' is another gem which could gain an award for the number of times it uses the word *constructive*, would that all feedback followed these guidelines.

If you are looking for a book that will help you develop your teaching skills and to open your mind to the broader aspects of teaching in the healthcare setting then this is a gem not to be missed. For once it is a book that lives up to its title: Teaching made easy.

Demonstrating your competence 1: Healthcare teaching

Chambers R., Mohanna K., Wakely G, and Wall D.

ISBN 1-85775-607-X

Radcliffe Medical Press

This book is for those who want to 'demonstrate their competence' in healthcare teaching and to keep up to date. Although written by doctors and aimed at doctors and their role in teaching it also acknowledges that the skills are transferable across the healthcare professions.

Have you ever been confused as to how Aims and Objectives differ, or the distinction between Mentoring and Supervision, or a Formative and Summative assessment. The explanations are all here in plain English, or at least their explanations in the educational setting are explained.

Not surprisingly given that the authors are almost the same as the previous book there is a similarity in

the chapter titles and content: Matching teaching methods with your message, organising activities, evaluation, assessment, appraisal, evaluation... however the focus of the chapters is distinctly different. Here the chapters make a significant use of detailed examples that enhance the message. There's also a very useful chapter on the 'challenging trainee': how to recognise the signs and symptoms of things going wrong, personal conflict, professional conflict, how to deal with challenges and when is it possible to get back on track and what to do if you can't.

What makes this book different is that it is designed to help you 'evidence your competence' in teaching. Competencies in healthcare seem to be the future, as is appraisal and continuing professional development. This book is a useful guide to assist you in that process.

Reviewing these books as a chaplain by profession who lectures in a healthcare setting the books had obvious appeal, what was surprising though was to find a recognised chaplaincy phrase taking a prominent place in medical/healthcare educational books: Pastoral Care is endorsed and encouraged in the chapter on supervision and support.

If you are wondering which of these books to consider, the manual 'does what it says on the tin' it's a comprehensive manual that you can pick up and dip into time and time again. If you are looking to evidence your individual competence and have a working tool with examples to help you then this first book in the series 'Demonstrating your competence' is for you. I look forward to the others in the series.

David Mitchell, lecturer in palliative care, Marie Curie Hospice Glasgow.