

Book Reviews

A Good Death: Challenges, Choices and Care Options

Charles Meyer

Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 1998, 57 pp., \$6.95 (paperback)

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS VOLUME the author states that Americans consider an ideal, good death to be quick, painless, at home, and surrounded by family. He then challenges the reality of this occurring by stating that 85 percent of us die in medical settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, and skilled care facilities. His purpose in this book is to describe more fully the actual experience of dying in these medical settings compared to dying at home and to provide the reader with guidelines to achieve a "good death" regardless of where the death occurs.

Within the space of 57 pages the read-

er receives a historical review of significant shifts in the focus of healthcare; a description of the issues that someone would face when dying in medical settings; a review of alternative or complementary therapies; a description of arguments for and against euthanasia and challenges to good pain management; a description of the role of spirituality during dying; and hints for obtaining a good death. These chapters are concise and factual.

Although the author states this book is designed to help someone achieve a good death, it is difficult to determine whether the audience for this book is the lay public or professionals. The content provides useful background for someone who needs to understand a context of our current healthcare system, but violates principles of good "patient teaching"—to keep it simple and focus on need-to-know information. Nice-to-know information should

be placed at the end or within an appendix. Chapters describing how we die and strategies to obtain a good death would be more focused for lay readers if they were presented first, followed by the chapter on spirituality. While they contain useful information, the remaining chapters are superfluous to the main thesis. They would best be presented within the appendixes.

This book provides little new information for informed healthcare professionals and might be confusing for people looking for a guide to ensuring a quick, painless death at home surrounded by family for themselves and their loved ones. I would recommend this book cautiously to the audience for whom it was intended.

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*Supportive Care of the Dying:
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BOOK BRIEFS

Making the Moments Count: Leisure Activities for Caregiving Relationships

Joanne Ardolf Decker, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1997, 192 pp., \$29.95 (hardcover)

The author, a certified therapeutic recreation specialist, provides practical suggestions for spending leisure time with people of all ages who need care, whether they are recovering from an illness, facing a terminal disease, or growing older and more dependent on outside help. The text is a helpful guide for professional, volunteer, and family caregivers who want to provide care not just for the body but also for the mind and spirit. Topics include keeping the mind active; general body movement; influencing self-esteem and outlook; making plans for each day; keeping outings simple; and hobbies, interests, and

feeling useful. Case examples, checklists, and suggestion lists are included.

Curriculum Development for Medical Education: A Six-Step Approach

David E. Kern, Patricia A. Thomas, Donna M. Howard, and Eric B. Bass, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998, 176 pp., \$45 (paperback)

This text's goal is to provide a practical approach to the curriculum process, including development, implementation, evaluation, and continual refinement. Designed for use by program directors and others responsible for the education of students, residents, fellows, and clinical practitioners, the book offers particular help to those beginning or in the middle of curriculum development. Many real-life examples illustrate the major points. Each

chapter has a list of general references to help readers pursue specific topics in greater depth. An appendix supplies samples of three curricula that went through the six-step process.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Guiding Children through Life's Losses: Prayers, Rituals & Activities, Phyllis Vos Wezeman, Jude Dennis Fournier, and Kenneth R. Wezeman, Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, CT, 1998

The Changing Face of Health Care, John F. Kilner, Robert D. Orr, and Judith Allen Shelly, ed., Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K., 1998

In the Face of Suffering, Jos V. M. Welie, Creighton University Press, Omaha, NE, 1998