

# Book Reviews

## Strong Medicine

George C. Halvorson

Random House, New York City, 1993,  
256 pp., \$19 (hard cover)

THIS WELL-WRITTEN TEXT DESCRIBES—with clarity and precision—the United States healthcare system from the 1960s to the present. In his introduction, George C. Halvorson states that reading the first five or six pages of each chapter will give the reader a synopsis of that section. A reader can then move on to the next chapter if time is short. However, you may find yourself spending more time on the chapters that require more careful reading.

The first six chapters make an excellent reference text for those now entering the healthcare profession in any capacity. These chapters give a historical summary of what has been happening in the health-

care delivery system from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. Chapter headings give an excellent clue to what is in each chapter. Halvorson depicts very well the practices, beliefs, approaches, and use of technology during these 20 years. He also points out the misuses of our healthcare system and why it has led to an unrealistic vision of what healthcare should be.

Anyone who has been deeply involved in healthcare could probably start reading *Strong Medicine* at Chapter Seven. Only those who have been living in a cocoon would be unaware of the problems of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These problems include insurance programs based on risk selection and avoidance; unnecessary, complex, and wasteful healthcare services; “defensive medicine”; a nonsystem approach to care; and a hospital “arms race” based on revenue, not care. These and others mentioned by the author are the root of the present situation.

Chapter Seven presents a clear analysis of current reform proposals and options—defining the positive aspects, as well as potential pitfalls. Chapter Eight presents various solutions and offers 12 major objectives related to healthcare reform. Among the 12 listed are insurance industry reform, universal coverage, and appropriate use of technology. A significant number of team providers of healthcare in many parts of the nation are already implementing many of the solutions and objectives.

Certainly not all providers are at the same point of progress. This book, however, is an excellent reference to be studied at whatever place you find yourself and whatever your opportunities are for implementation.

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## BOOK BRIEFS

### Pastoral Care of the Mentally Disabled: Advancing Care of the Whole Person

Sally K. Severino, MD, and Rev. Richard Liew, eds., Haworth Pastoral Press, Binghamton, NY, 1994, 116 pp., \$29.95

Society is calling for the spiritual and healthcare communities to participate in the healing of mentally ill persons. This book's 16 contributors address the perceived roles of clergy and physicians for healing the whole person, stressing that this best occurs when medicine and ministry collaborate. Issues covered include the role of faith in mental healing, the role of mental health in spiritual growth, the practical application of concepts to a clinical case, a partnership model for tending the mentally ill.

Chaplains, pastoral counselors, psychotherapists, social workers, and clergy may find the book useful.

### Home Care: Current Problems and Future Solutions

Warren Balinsky, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1994, 230 pp., \$29.95

Home care existed long before there were hospitals. For a variety of reasons—including skyrocketing healthcare costs, an aging population, and changes in diseases and disabilities (the appearance of AIDS, for example)—home care is today getting renewed attention. This book focuses on three aspects of the subject. Part One asks, Which patients are appropriate for home care? Part Two discusses different models of home care (shared aide, high tech, hos-

pice, and long term). Part Three takes up the legal and quality assurance issues involved.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**The Crisis of Care: Affirming and Restoring Caring Practices in the Helping Professions**, Susan S. Phillips and Patricia Benner, eds., Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 1994

**Health and Social Policy**, Marvin D. Feit and Stanley F. Battle, eds., Haworth Press, Binghamton, NY, 1995

**HMOs and the Elderly**, Harold S. Luft, ed., Health Administration Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1994