

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

**Jerry Menikoff, Edward P Richards. *What the doctor didn't say: the hidden truth about medical research.* New York: Oxford University Press; 2006. Pp 321, \$29.95, ISBN 978-0-19-514797-1. Reviewed by BA Woodward in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 356: 877-8.**

The book's authors deplore the less-than-honest consent forms used in research studies even while they argue that research trials are the only way to make medical progress. The reviewer feels that this emphasis on medical progress ignores more basic moral values such as compassion and patient autonomy.

**Richard F Mollica. *Healing invisible wounds: paths to hope and recovery in a violent world.* New York, NY: Harcourt; 2006. Pp 288, US\$26, ISBN 0-151-01036-6. Reviewed by D Palumbo in *Lancet* 2007; 369: 734.**

The book's message is that "ultimately people heal themselves. And that the lessons we can learn from the survivors of such extreme trials can teach us how to better cope with everyday life." The author feels that healthcare professionals can help trauma victims through listening carefully and encouraging them to use their strengths to overcome their trauma.

**W Grant Thompson. *The placebo effect and health: combining science and compassionate care.* New York: Prometheus Books; 2005. Pp 350, \$23.00, ISBN 1-59102-275-4. Reviewed by HM Finestone in *CMAJ* 2006; 175:1413.**

The author describes the role of placebo and how the doctor's bedside manner can also have a good, "placebo," effect or a "nocebo," negative, effect. The reviewer says that "physicians have to care. We have to feel that what's going on between our patients and us is meaningful, worthwhile and actually works. We have to recognise as well that when we develop that unique patient-doctor bond, what we say and how we say it can be therapeutic in many ways."

**Michael F Myers, Carla Fine. *Touched by suicide: hope and healing after loss.* New York: Gotham Books; 2006. Pp 320, Can\$19.50, ISBN 1-592-40228-3. Reviewed by Paul S. Links in *CMAJ* 2007; 176: 1465.**

The sudden death of a loved one is devastating but when the death is from suicide, it is even more so for those left behind, referred to as suicide survivors. This book, written by a mental health professional and a suicide survivor, deals with coping in the immediate aftermath of suicide and learning to put one's life back together in the months that follow.

**Walter Glannon. *Bioethics and the brain.* New York: Oxford University Press; 2007. Pp 235, \$45, ISBN 978-0-19-530778-8. Reviewed by AL Caplan in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 356:2758-9.**

The author describes the various scientific breakthroughs that have suggested links between brain locations and various behaviors and traits. He argues that efforts to improve one or the other brain function are hazardous as the outcome is

unpredictable in a complex organ like the brain.

**William F Bynum, Helen Bynum, editors. *Dictionary of medical biography.* Vols 1-5. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; 2007; Pp 1616, US\$749.95 (set), ISBN 0-313-32877-3. Reviewed by Ken Flegel in *CMAJ* 2007; 177: 70.**

This is an encyclopedia of 1,140 persons in allopathic and alternative medicine from western and other parts of the world, and their contributions to medicine. It also has appendices that list the persons covered by country, field of activity and date of birth.

**Richard P Sloan. *Blind faith: the unholy alliance of religion and medicine.* New York: St Martin's Press; 2006. Pp 304, US\$25.95 ISBN 0-312-34881-9. Reviewed by LR Churchill in *Lancet* 2007; 369:1509-10.**

The author is outraged by dubious scientific studies that purport to demonstrate the advantage of religious activities in health. He is mindful of the comfort that patients derive from religion in times of stress but warns physicians against religious bias and proselytising.

**Bethany J Spielman. *Bioethics in law.* Totowa, NJ: Humana Press; 2007. Pp 181, \$69.50, ISBN 978-1-58829-434-0. Reviewed by SM Wolf in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 357: 426-7.**

Bioethics originated from philosophy, medicine and theology but also has intimate links with law. Both bioethics and law deal with rights and responsibilities but in different ways. This book describes the impact of bioethics in a courtroom in the US.

**Michael E Schatman, editor. *Ethical issues in chronic pain management (Pain Management. 1.)* New York: Informa Healthcare; 2007. Pp 312, \$149.95, ISBN 978-0-8493-9268-9. Reviewed by RM Hays in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 356:2551.**

Chronic pain is either treated with indifference by doctors or over-treated to the point that it causes drug dependence. The essays in this book cover various ethical issues in chronic pain management ranging from the challenge of treating in the elderly and appropriate assessment of pain in children to the different perspectives on opioid treatment for chronic pain.

**Ilan H Meyer, Mary E Northridge, editors. *The health of sexual minorities: public health perspectives on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations.* New York: Springer; 2007. Pp 731, \$89.95, ISBN 978-0-387-28871-0. Reviewed by M King in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 356:2435-6.**

Heterosexuals are normal while all others are not - this is the belief in most cultures and religions. Social stigma has made this group go underground in many countries and therefore their public health needs have not been studied and addressed effectively. This book deals with these issues from a North American perspective.