

BOOK REVIEW

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN LEGAL MEDICINE

Edited by Dr Clarence Tan Tiong Tee.

Published by the Medico-legal Society of Singapore 1981. 125 pages. S\$8.00

This book is most welcome. To medical practitioners and lawyers who have hitherto bemoaned the fact that an authoritative book on medico-legal problems in Singapore is lacking, this book will fill part of the need. Since its inception in 1972, the Medico-legal Society of Singapore has held annual Seminars on Legal Medicine. Papers presented at these seminars have been collected and published in this book. The subjects covered are wide-ranging, and the authors prominent medical and legal practitioners in town. To doctors, the "law articles" are worth studying.

The Attorney-General of Singapore kicks off with a thought-provoking article on the "Code of Ethics and Disciplinary Proceedings", with emphasis on professional rights and responsibilities, the right of self-regulation in the professions and accountability, jurisdiction of disciplinary committees, fair impartial hearings and rights of parties outside the professions.

What I think would interest doctors most are the articles on "Medical Negligence" and "Legal Implications of Medical Practice". Apart from general principles, many leading cases are cited together with quotations from the law reports — this is useful as doctors do not know how to refer to the law reports. The latest in the series of cases is *Whitehouse v. Jordan* [1980] 1 All E.R. 650. At the time of publication of this book, there was an appeal pending to the House of Lords. Their Lordships gave their judgment on 17th December 1981 when they unanimously upheld the Court of Appeal's majority verdict that error of judgment need not be negligence. Those interested in reading this definitive view of professional negligence will find the report in [1981] 1 All E.R. 267. In addition to the law, case histories of local cases liven the reading of these articles.

"Defensive Medicine", a relatively new concept in medical practice, is discussed, the pros and cons debated, especially those affecting the Accident and Emergency Department and X-ray Services.

The "Boundaries of Medicine" discusses the natural and artificial restrictions to medical practice.

One often reads of "informed consent" especially in American publications. This is a concept developed in the United States where social conditions and legal development are different from those in Singapore. The law as to consent in Singapore is propounded in two articles.

Four other topics complete the contents of the book — Traffic Accidents, Drug Abusers, Transsexualism and Scientific Handwriting Analysis.

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