

cursive treatment. While it is still useful in that area, its discussion of other types of research technique should be treated with some caution.

One final point: the publishers are surely giving the most extraordinary hostage to fortune by sending for review in this journal a book which purports to deal with the evaluation of research reports and which makes no reference whatsoever to the necessity for an ethical as well as a technical appraisal.

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The Unmasking of Medicine

Ian Kennedy

London, George Allen & Unwin, 1981
£8.95

If you take your harp to a party, you also take a calculated risk that no one will ask you to play; but you do feel at a loss when you find that Marisa Robles has just completed an hour-long recital. I find myself in much the same position. First, the Reith Lectures, then *The Listener* and now *The Unmasking of Medicine*. All have been the subject of commentary by experts in many walks of life and a whole issue of the Journal has been devoted to criticism of the subject matter. What more is there to say or do? To review the reviewers? On the whole, it seems best to ignore everyone else and start from scratch.

Mr Kennedy is, of course, a powerful and greatly respected authority on

moral issues in medicine. He has, in one view, discussed these better in other works – possibly a reflection of the ‘broad brush’ technique adopted in this book – and it is good to see Chapter 7 included as an addition to the original Reith Lectures. He clearly feels that doctors should not place themselves in a position of superiority *vis à vis* their patients, that there are decisions, currently taken unilaterally by doctors, which would be better resolved by the community as a whole and that doctors ought not to conflict with the law when acting in a professional capacity. In this area, the author writes as a client or consumer or receptor and his views command respect and consideration. Indeed, anyone who, like this reviewer, is exposed to a large law class in medical jurisprudence must agree with 90 per cent of what he says.

Why, then, am I vaguely dissatisfied with this book? There are two main reasons. Firstly, I find the author loses some credibility when he changes from consumer to interpreter as in ‘The Rhetoric of Medicine’. This is the opening chapter and it takes the medical reader some time to get back into a receptive frame of mind. Secondly – and it has taken a lot of thought to arrive at this conclusion – I think the title is misleading. *The Unmasking of Medicine* implies a discussion of the practice of medicine and, by association, of the attitudes of doctors. But, as Mr Kennedy says, his main concern is the politico-social operation of the health services and this must include responsibility for the training of doctors. Simplistically, I feel one needs mentally to re-title the book ‘The Unmasking of Medical Politics’ before being able to appreciate it as the very important document it undoubtedly is. Very few recent disser-

tations in this field have provoked so much discussion.

In a way, it is a pity that Mr Kennedy is a well known lawyer. Inevitably, his self-confessed aggressive style – and it is acerbic – leads to an impression of a confrontation between the law and medicine: when hospital consultants are castigated for elitism, one’s irrational but nonetheless ‘gut’ reaction is to think of barristers. But, in fact, the author of this book does not *have* to be legally qualified – it contains little which could not have been written by any intelligent man who enjoys a discussion over a glass of malt; I remember, for example, the strictures on the medical support for the developing countries being aired at a medical dinner by the Duke of Edinburgh some 15 years ago.

Since the book is so essentially patient orientated, one’s main concern is to establish how it should influence our undergraduate teaching. The student body is not stony ground – it is significant that medical students are forming their own discussion groups on medical morality and that an awareness, such as Kennedy calls for, is, in fact, emerging. Looked at in this way, the book is not so much ‘unmasking’ medicine as ‘scrubbing up’ for a new generation of doctors. The Reith Lectures, and now the book ought to have a permanent effect on British medical philosophy but if the ensuing debate is to be fully beneficial, as I sincerely hope it will be, any sense of antagonism must be eliminated. With this in mind, could I ask you, Mr Kennedy, to cool it just a little, please?

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News and Notes

Research Defence Society medal winners

Dr W Lane-Petter and the Earl of Halsbury are the first winners of the Research Defence Society’s Boyd medal. The medal commemorates the name of Sir John Boyd who was chairman of the society from 1957–1968. It may be presented biennially to anyone who, in the opinion of the society’s council, has made a noteworthy contribution to the welfare of laboratory animals.

Dr Lane-Petter was described at the presentation as one of the original pioneers of laboratory animal science. He has produced a standard textbook on *The Care and Management of Laboratory Animals*.

The Earl of Halsbury received his medal for his work in Parliamentary and other debates, to improve the welfare of laboratory animals.



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The Unmasking of Medicine covers a range of topics that were, and still are, important to the practice of medicine in the United Kingdom. Kennedy describes a situation where modern medicine had reached its pre-eminent position in society as a result of $\hat{\epsilon}$ View Full Text. Log in. Log in using your username and password. BMA Member Log In. If you have a subscription to The BMJ, log in: Username *.