
Book review

Linda Lee Daniel, RN, MN
Associate Professor of Nursing
Community Health Nursing
University of Michigan School of Nursing
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Home Health Care Nursing, edited by Ida Martinson and Ann Widmer. 1989, W. B. Saunders, The Curtis Center, Independence Square West, Philadelphia, PA 19106. 436 pages. \$39.95.

This textbook presents an interesting and informative overview of home health care nursing. The authors state that the book is intended for professional nurses in clinical practice and management as well as for nursing students. This focus makes the book different from many of the current home health care books, which approach the subject from either a clinical or management focus. The book is written in a textbook style that is useful for the reader who wants to learn about home health care but is less useful for the practicing home health care professional.

The book, which is divided into five sections, first discusses the role of home

health care within the overall health care system. The first section is an excellent compilation of material on the history of home care, discharge planning, sources of funding for home health care, and specific models of delivery of home health care. The historical development of home health care gives the reader a feel for how the discipline reached the present delivery status. The section on funding for home health care presents an excellent overview of services covered by both Medicare and Medicaid including Medicaid waiver programs.

The first section would be most useful to students or professionals new to the field of home health care. Although the material provides a fine overview, its coverage is not deep enough to provide much assistance for a manager in a home health care agency.

The second section, "Nursing Competencies in Home Health," presents a mixed bag of content. The first chapter, which discusses the component of family assessment, is extremely well written and suggests a creative approach to family assess-

ment. The next two chapters present a list of North American Nursing Diagnosis Association (NANDA) approved nursing diagnoses, applications of nursing diagnoses to home health care, and the development of the Omaha System for using nursing diagnoses in home health practice. The next three chapters are devoted to management of pain, medication, and nutrition.

The chapter on medications attempts to cover too much material and thus gives a mere overview with little useful information for the practitioner. The chapter on nutrition covers the components of a nutritional assessment, identification of high-risk clients, and enteral and parenteral home nutrition support. Part of the chapter is technical and difficult to follow.

The last two chapters in this section discuss rehabilitation and assistive devices. These chapters are comprehensive; however, they are brief and present an overall approach rather than specific applications for clients in home health care.

A major strength of the book is the third section, "Caring for Families in the Home." Chapters in this section cover needs of perinatal families in the home setting, an overview of home care needs for children, and special needs of the elderly at home. The chapter on needs of perinatal families presents material that could easily be adapted for a clinical agency. The chapter on needs of children is more theoretical and would be most useful in the area of program planning in home care. The chapter on the elderly includes both theoretical and practical content. The chapter on death and dying would be useful for both the practitioner and the manager in home health care. Several tables are presented for assisting in the assessment of the dying patient. The chapter also discusses the caregiver's role, including experiences with stress and the relationship between the

needs of the caregiver and those of the patient.

A major portion and major strength of the book is the section "Clients with Specific Disorders." The six chapters in this section present strong clinical discussions of pulmonary disease, cancer and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), stroke, Alzheimer's disease, spinal cord injuries, and renal and genitourinary diseases. This part of the book would be most helpful to the professional nurse in home health care practice because it presents assessment guides as well as specific nursing interventions in relation to the needs of the home health care patient. The chapters would also be useful to students providing home health care as part of the clinical experience.

The last part of the book, "Professional Challenges in Home Health Nursing," covers ethical issues, stress and burnout in the home care professional, and promoting research in home health care. The chapter on stress and burnout explains the many factors that promote stress in the home health care professional; however, its solutions for decreasing stress are brief and simplistic for such a major issue and concern in the field.

Overall the book provides an excellent overview of the field of home health care. The book would be most helpful for undergraduate students in home health care or community health nurses gaining clinical experience. The book would also help a professional nurse new to home health care: As part of an orientation, the book would give the nurse the needed background for understanding the current delivery and reimbursement system in home health care. The book would be useful as a resource in all home health care agencies, but because it is organized as a text, it would be difficult to use as a reference.

For the practicing nurse in home health care, part III, "Caring for Families in the Home" and part IV, "Clients with Specific Disorders," would be most useful. Nurses in home health care are often so involved with the day-to-day practice and issues

related to reimbursement that they may not appreciate the overall scope of home health care. This book would provide the needed background for a full understanding of the role of home health care in the overall health care system.