

24 hours demonstrates the sensitivity and skill required every minute to maintain his right to remain in control and in character, and to continue fighting as long as he wished. Flexibility of care and an individual approach have real costs as well as rewards for staff.

The three chapters by patients are moving. Sidney Reeman and Brenda Dawson express their disbelief, rage, joy, doubt and faith in poetry—the first in a gently ironic tone, the second with a voice that sometimes recalls Rilke. Ted Holden suggests training for patients who face long-term illness, and discovers the principle 'The greatest act of self-interest is to be as unselfish as possible'. These three chapters and the other three by relatives provide evidence that this can be a time of growth. Challenges can be faced and overcome—best shown by Ann Murley's description of the death of her mother, in her own home but supported by the resources of the hospice.

Most of the deaths recorded here took place in the hospice and in the early years patients spent far longer in institutional care than they would in today's climate of community care. The development of Home Care, particularly in the 1980s, goes hand-in-hand with shorter stays

and a greater emphasis on relationships between family and friends rather than between patients on the ward and between patients and staff.

This book seems aimed at a lay audience, and sometimes a note of cosiness creeps in. Everyone dies peacefully, including George. This is reinforced by the physical appearance of the book, which is homely rather than elegant or arresting. As I read it I admired the skill and compassion of the staff, the courage of patients and their families, but I missed the sense of the awesome and unconquerable nature of death.

FRANCES SHELDON
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* Available from St. Christopher's Hospice, 51/59
Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham, London SE20 6DZ.

THE EARLY DAYS OF GRIEVING*
Derek Nuttall. Beaconsfield: Beaconsfield Pub. Ltd., 1991. £2.50 + 35p p&p.

Written in simple, direct language this short booklet should be stocked by GPs.

funeral directors, hospital bereavement officers, and others whose work brings them into contact with the newly bereaved. The author has drawn on his long experience as the former director of Cruse—Bereavement Care to provide bereaved people with the information they need to cope with the practical problems which arise after a death, to explain and reassure people about the frightening emotions and bodily symptoms which they are likely to suffer and to direct those who need it to other sources of help. He does this without becoming sentimental, mawkish or doctrinaire and his booklet is to be recommended to all bereaved people and to others who would like to help but don't know how.

COLIN MURRAY PARKES
Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry

* These two reviews first appeared in *The British Medical Journal* and are reprinted with kind permission.

The *Early Day of Grieving* is available from Cruse—Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR, price £2.85 inc. p&p.

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