

Palliative care – getting the focus right

Palliative care. A patient-centered approach.

Geoffrey Mitchell. Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing, 2008 (xiv + 168 pp, \$69.00). ISBN 978 1 85775 737 2.

NEXT TIME YOU VISIT the trade display at a palliative care conference, you will find a plethora of books on the subject, covering just about every conceivable aspect of this expanding field: “text-book”, “handbook”, “practical guide”, “core skills and competencies”, “pearls”, “practices”, “guidelines”, “emergencies” etc. Geoffrey Mitchell, professor of palliative care at the University of Queensland and well known in Australian palliative care circles, has found another angle that definitely needed covering: “a patient-centered approach” (a fundamental philosophical concept underpinning good quality palliative medicine practice but, surprisingly, not always well covered by the standard texts).

This small, easy-to-read book is the latest monograph in a UK-based series on patient-centred medicine (which is “transforming the clinical method”, according to the series editor) as it applies to various specialties. The book is clearly aimed at general practition-



ers but is also relevant to specialists in the field, especially the middle chapters that cover various dimensions of the interaction between the terminally ill patient, their illness and the environment. These chapters cover such topics as “the illness experience”, “understanding the whole person” and “enhancing the patient–clinician relationship”. On the other hand, chapters on the pathophysiology of symptoms and their management are definitely written for the GP readership.

A particular strength of the book is its in-depth coverage of how the patient-centred approach applies to children. The book will also help specialists better understand the perspective of their colleagues in general practice, who provide the majority of palliative care.

In dedicating the book to his family, the author says he has been truly blessed. Dying patients whose GPs adopt a patient-centred approach to palliative care will also be blessed.

Paul A Glare

Head, Palliative Care

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, NSW