



clinician. His main characteristics were his humanity, his warmth and his care for the students, patients and staff with whom he came in contact. He believed in the need for people from all walks of life to reach their potential and was very

generous with his time in giving them advice and constant encouragement. He was a wonderful friend, who always had time to listen. He was invariably kind, courteous and gentle, and it was these qualities that endeared him to all who met

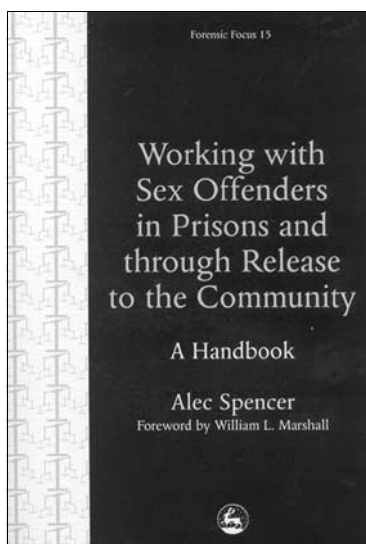
him. He leaves a widow, Nini, a son, Mark, by an earlier marriage to Sylvia Hepton, a stepson Bruce and a stepdaughter Emma and his brother Stanley.

Peter Fenwick

reviews

Working with Sex Offenders in Prisons and through Release to the Community: A Handbook

By Alec Spencer. London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 1999. 252 pp. £17.95 (pb). ISBN: 1-85302-767-7



Let me first come clean. I remain to be convinced that the sex offender treatment industry as currently organised can justify its existence. I accept the need to do something to reduce the risk of re-offending. Nevertheless, sex offenders are a group *par excellence* where long-term follow-up is necessary because the risk of recidivism remains for many years. Alec Spencer reinforced my prejudices to a degree by describing a sophisticated treatment programme in Peterhead Prison, Scotland, with a maintenance programme to continue this work throughout the sentence, and then what? How will any gains be maintained in the community? To be fair, in the two chapters on 'bridging the gap' the author does tackle these issues, but the effort put into the Sex Offenders Treatment Programme (STOP in Scotland, but SOTP in England and Wales) cannot be supported on the evidence available. It would be surprising if their own treatment

programmes in a locked institution could have a significant impact without similar (rather than the current patchy provision) systems in the community for prison programmes to plug into.

Nevertheless, although I did not think I would like the book, I was won over. I liked the style and I liked the layout, with a summary of key points after each section. The section on offenders (particularly female offenders) was informative. At times there was an uneasy shift of focus from Peterhead Prison to a national perspective, which was not always convincing. The author also slips from evidence to opinion rather too easily, sometimes restating opinions as though they are facts. I was mistaken in thinking that this book would only interest those engaged in this work. There are excellent sections on child visiting, the victim's perspective and on pornography in prison, which will be of interest to staff of all disciplines based in secure forensic in-patient units. These services have struggled with these issues (and Ashworth Hospital comes to mind here) and I agree with all that the author says on these topics. Why cannot secure hospital units also be pornography free zones?

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Letters From the Clinic. Letter Writing in Clinical Practice for Mental Health Professionals

By Derek Steinberg. London & Philadelphia: Routledge. 2000. 130 pp. £15.99 pb. ISBN: 0-415-20504-2

We all send, read and receive acres of letters about our patients and clinical work, indeed writing and reading letters could even be said to take up the majority of the time of senior psychiatrists. Yet it's amazing how little discussion about the process of letter writing exists, and how impoverished the literature is on improving clinical practice through the

more deliberate use of letters. The primary point of this unique book is the power of words, and the value of choosing thoughtfully what we say in our letters.

There was a tradition in the professional unit at the Maudsley Hospital where a group of registrars would be required to read each other the letters they had written that week, not, as would firmly be pointed out, for the purposes of mutual congratulation. The issues for discussion included the internal logic of letters, their ability not just to inform, but to persuade and convince the receiver to collaborate in a shared therapeutic perspective of the problem.

This book suggests a reappraisal of the use of letters in clinical practice and argues their potential power has been underestimated to improve relationships between professionals and service users. Indeed, given how closely letters are tied in the popular imagination with the deepening of relationships, and how emotionally powerful it is to receive a letter from a friend or relative, it is odd psychiatrists of all professionals have neglected their potential.

A particularly intriguing suggestion from the book is the use of the letter to the patient to summarise and clarify what had happened in a just ended session with the therapist as an aide to heightening the therapeutic impact of the clinical encounter.

