



SPECIAL REVIEW

Home-Based HIV/AIDS Care

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Home-Based HIV/AIDS Care. By Leana Uys and Sue Cameron. Pp. viii + 207. Illustrated. R150.00. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-19-578198-8.

If President Thabo Mbeki's greatest contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS turns out to be using the pandemic to raise global awareness of poverty, then this book's greatest legacy will be having taught South Africans how to deal with both.

The editors of *Home-Based HIV/AIDS Care*, Leana Uys and Sue Cameron, stare unflinchingly into the agonised face of poverty and offer a practical step-by-step guide to dealing with its greatest-ever aggravation — HIV/AIDS.

As KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast Hospice Director, Kath Defilippi notes in her chapter 'Dealing with Poverty' (part of the mix of 11 expert contributions), the virus is forcing the most vulnerable — grandparents and children — to care for their sick and dying breadwinners. The pandemic (now estimated to be killing 600 people per day) has so overwhelmed public hospitals and clinics that community- and home-based HIV/AIDS care are now widely accepted as the most sensible way to provide effective palliative and medical care.

Until this book arrived on the scene, there were few holistic and authoritative compasses to guide the ever-growing army of caregivers through the complex, harsh and stigma-ridden terrain of AIDS-ravaged communities.

With people barely able to survive, let alone help loved ones die with dignity, the book is a beacon of light for anyone intending to set up a home-based care network, from students and volunteers to nurses and doctors. Not only does it cover counselling and bereavement follow-up, setting up support groups, home visits, dealing with the circumstances of poverty and teaching infection control at home, but you're told how to deal with symptoms and help families plan for those who still have a future. Inevitably this 'orphan planning' alone gives great solace to dying parents, especially when they can see their children and elders being helped to access State resources and grants.

To say this is a book for its time may sound grandiose, but that's the simple truth. Even for a lay reader like myself it's a fascinating reference work and source of vital information with

which to flesh out what little I already know. I suspect I'm in excellent company.

Having grown up in a part of KwaZulu-Natal where people travelled on average 15 km by donkey or on foot to attend a once-weekly clinic at our trading store, the simple guidelines on patient care in under-resourced settings resonated like a cow-hide drum for me. A recent visit back to my childhood stamping ground and a tour of the rural Eastern Cape strongly suggest to me that not much has changed in terms of rural health care delivery, given the added pressure of the pandemic.

The contributors' list for the book reads like a Who's Who in Home Based Care in South Africa. Besides those already mentioned are Liz Gwyther, convenor for the postgraduate programmes in palliative medicine at UCT and CEO of St Luke's Hospice, Jill Knott, head of the Psychosocial Service Department at Wits, and of Soweto Hospices and the Centre for Palliative Learning at Wits, Joan Marston, Executive Director of the Naledi Hospice and the St Nicholas Children's Hospice in the Free State, Rose Smart, managing consultant for Save the Children, and Laura Ziady, Infection Control Unit manager at the Bloemfontein Medi-Clinic and lecturer at the Free State University School of Nursing.

Stefan Blom is Director of the Counselling and Psychological Empowerment Consultancy and a practising family therapist, while his colleague Carey Bremridge is the University of Stellenbosch's HIV/AIDS programme manager.

Editor Leana Uys is Professor of Nursing and Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Natal, while coeditor Sue Cameron is Head of Education and Training at Pretoria Sungardens Hospice.

Sections on self-awareness and self-care give community caregivers the tools to stay physically and psychologically robust when constantly faced with so much apparent hopelessness.

The book is an article of faith in human compassion. It will give you the tools to create a more hopeful, if not a better, life for many, right down to the actual forms for assessing and monitoring patients, a presenting symptoms tick list, community caregiver job descriptions and media policies.

If you don't already have it, you might just get it!

