

medical students would benefit from reviewing these two books and others and deciding which format and content will best meet their needs.

In summary, *Essentials of Family Practice* is an important new resource for teaching medical students about the structure and content of family practice. This text contains a wealth of information that can be used in medical student education. The book also reflects the challenge that confronts family medicine educators. In particular, how do we convey to learners both the process and content of the specialty of family practice and meet both of these objectives within a limited period of time? Rakel and his colleagues have written a useful book that will aid family medicine educators as they seek to meet this challenge. The book, much as the one by Sloane and others, should not simply be handed to medical students with the expectation they will read it and thereby understand the specialty of family practice. Rather, such texts will furnish family medicine educators with a foundation upon which they can build their family medicine curriculum for medical students. Dr. Rakel and his colleagues are to be commended for their valuable contribution.

David Garr, MD  
Alec Chessman, MD  
Medical University of South Carolina  
Charleston

**Family Health Care.** Edited by Russell J. Sawa. 297 pp. Newbury Park, CA. Sage Publications, 1992. \$42.95. ISBN 0-8039-4748-8; \$21.95 (paper) ISBN 0-8039-4749-6.

Where are we in our current thinking about the relation of the family to health and disease? Is it a misnomer when we call ourselves family physicians? Are insights from family theory helpful to the clinician? If we are able to define a family, how do we then study it? Sawa and 16 knowledgeable scholars analyze these issues under the framing hypothesis that "the inclusion of the family in primary care leads to a more effective prevention, diagnosis, management and rehabilitation plan." This book is a compilation of presentations by these experts at a 1990 symposium in Calgary devoted to examining the role of the family in primary care. Issues were explored from four perspectives: theory, methodology, education, and practice. Three scholars and a respondent were chosen to address each area. Predominantly academic family physicians, these participants also represented such disciplines as medical anthropology, psychology, organizational behavior, family social science, and history of medicine.

This text is well referenced with a helpful index. It provides a concise overview of relevant family systems theory, methodology, and approaches toward family therapy and research. The dialogue is informative, thought provoking and, at times, controversial.

For instance, Ransom questions the current methodology for family-oriented health care research and suggests a more person-focused approach. He points out the inherent inaccuracy of characterizing the family as a homogeneous entity because it is multi-dimensional, multileveled, and dynamic. Rogers provides a critical review of the major textbooks dealing with family-oriented health care, emphasizes the lack of a coherent approach among these authors, and proposes that their advice and models reflect more of an idealized description than everyday practice. He advises process, tracing studies of the actual care provided by exemplary physicians to provide credible conceptual models. Perkin speculates that "the majority of present day family physicians do not fulfill the family part of the clinical picture as well as their predecessors, largely as a result of changes over which they have no control." Authors such as Baird and Sawa respond to these observations with thoughtful contributions including Doherty and Baird's discussion entitled *Five Levels of Physician Involvement with the Family* and Sawa's approach to patients called *Three Ways of Thinking*.

The most likely audience for this book will be educators who wish to be familiar with the application of current knowledge of family systems theory and therapy to family medicine and primary care. The family medicine researcher will also discover stimulating ideas and numerous suggestions for further exploration.

As might be expected in a book of this nature, there is considerable overlap and the message is often inconsistent — a tradeoff for the vitality that comes from diversity. Few authors maintain their focus on the framing hypothesis, and at times the language and terminology of some tend to create expectations for a new paradigm and new way of being a physician that strain credibility. Also, the paperback issue is so tightly bound that it is difficult to open the pages fully. Nevertheless, these drawbacks are well compensated by the opportunity to share in this engaging colloquium with a remarkable group of scholars who are devoting substantial portions of their careers to exploring the interaction of the family with health and disease and who are seeking frameworks from which to study these relations. This book thus contributes importantly to one of the most critical issues in family medicine affecting our conceptual foundation, our self-perception, and our future.

Vincent R. Hunt, MD  
Brown University/Memorial Hospital  
of Rhode Island  
Pawtucket

**Grand Rounds on Medical Malpractice.** By Francis X. Campion. 372 pp. Chicago, The Risk Management Foundation