

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Legacies in Law and Medicine*

REFERENCE: Burns, C. R., Ed., *Legacies in Law and Medicine*, Science History Publications, New York, 1977, 310 pages, \$7.95.

This work is intended for use by historians as a basis for the study of the interrelationships between medicine and the law in society. To emphasize that medicine has found a structured, although different, role today, the first section deals with pre-1500 relations. These dissertations show us the place of the physician and surgeon in those times and especially the difficulties in licensing and controlling the unauthorized practice of the profession. The remainder of the book deals with medical licensure through the last century in England and the United States, medical malpractice, public health legislation, and forensic medicine.

The entanglements of the legal structure with the goals of medicine and the attempts by the medical profession to gain support of the legislative bodies are fully developed. The reader is left with an understanding of the many barriers that have been raised and passed to reach the present state of the practice of medicine with regard to licensure, quality assurance, and guarding of the public health.

Of specific interest is the section on forensic medicine, which is far too brief. The use of a physician as expert witness in a 1699 English murder case gives an excellent view into problems we are all concerned with, especially the quality of so-called expert witnesses. The total familiarity with similar occurrences today leads one to hope that, although unchanged since 1699, this condition will be corrected within the near future. An article on the M'Naghten case is enlightening as a view of the historian toward the background of the rule espoused by the court and its effect upon medicine and the courts of that time.

The editor has selected articles to display the key points of concern in the various areas covered. I would recommend this book to any lawyer or physician interested in the history of these professions and their interrelationship. The book is a source for basic understanding rather than current knowledge; however, such an understanding would be of great benefit today.

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