Handbook of medical sociology, 3rd edition.

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Abstract: The third edition of this handbook holds few surprises and contains little new material, although the contents have been reorganized, updated, revised and written by different authors. Several new topics, such as the relationship of environment and health, are included. The authors draw almost exclusively on North American sources and more chapters are purely descriptive accounts of aspects of the North American health care, for example, those on the organization of medical and dental practice and hospitals. Elsewhere the data presented and studies reviewed are also of U.S. origin and no systematic comparisons are made with other countries. I mention this not to...
discount the value of these reviews but to point out that they may be of lim non-American reader.
The introduction emphasizes the place of sociology in the medical curriculum is clearly aimed primarily at medical students. However, it is also said to be f who work in the health field " and " the experts of other disciplines ". For se hesitate to recommend this book as an introductory text to any of these gro book of this size and complexity, with such impenetrable prose, will probabl average overburdened medical student or busy health-care worker. If medi are to be encouraged to open their minds to sociology they must be stimul ideas, not stultified with excessive numbers of references and passages th belong to heavy-weight biochemistry or pharmacology texts.
Secondly, basic sociological ideas are not explained sufficiently clearly to the concepts are nowhere denned in simple terms, but they freely pepper the meaningless jargon (see, e.g. p. 56). One chapter, however, is largely free and is particularly well written: Patientpractitioner relationships, by S. W. BLC WILSON, gives a very clear exposition of Parsons' ideas about the sick role. whether such theoretical debate is the kind of material with which medical s be asked to grapple, remote as it is from their own experiences of doctorin; Thirdly, the contents of this book, which claims to be a sort of compendium, accurately reflect the field of medical sociology. As all the authors are from t functionalist school of sociology, the reader gets nothing like the full flavour approaches: no true taste is gained of Marxist analyses of the inequalities a of the health care system, or the acute observational detail of ethnometho accounts of institutional life. These are glaring omissions for a book which c comprehensive text on medical sociology.
I can find little to recommend in this large and disappointing book. It may be for the painstaking descriptions of the U.S. health-care system and the large it contains. In all other respects, however, it has been superseded by texts modest proportions and less pretentious aims.

Jane Hughes.
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