ment in the last decade—that of rationing of health care. The concluding chapter explains that while health policy needs to be reconfigured, this is very difficult, since health determinants have both social and political dimensions.

The occasional lack of critical analysis does not detract from the usefulness of the book. There are many excellent chapters and even those which do not analyse data adequately are extremely informative. Since the book reflects many contemporary western medical issues, it is not always relevant to the conditions in the developing world. However, it is very comprehensive and would make an excellent reference book. It is definitely a must for medical professionals, despite its high price.

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Obituary

Bhagwandas P. Shah
(24 December 1927–4 February 2001)

The death of Dr Bhagwandas P. Shah brings to an end an important chapter in the development of paediatrics in Mumbai. He introduced child psychiatry to the city and pursued its practice with a missionary zeal.

Dr Shah graduated from the Seth G.S. Medical College, Mumbai and went to the Maudsley Institute of Mental Health for training as a psychiatrist. He then joined the Worcester Child Guidance Clinic in USA for approved training in child psychiatry. He returned to India in 1958.

Bhagwandas arrived in Mumbai where a psychiatrist specializing in children was a new concept. Having worked with child psychiatrists in Worcester (Massachusetts) and realizing the scope of their work, he was determined to develop the specialty in Mumbai. Since none of the teaching hospitals had any place for a child psychiatrist Dr Shah started a private clinic.

It did not take long for another pioneering institution—the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)—to realize Dr Shah’s worth. They decided to start a Child Guidance Clinic (CGC) and B.J. Wadia Hospital for children offered them accommodation. This started a new era in the development of paediatrics as well as psychiatry. Dr Shah worked with the CGC from its inception in 1961 until 1990. When the Institute of Child Health was established in 1967, he was appointed Consultant Psychiatrist. He developed another CGC at the J.J. Hospital.

Among the various activities he developed in the CGCs were play therapy, working out an Indian model for development quotient study of children of problem parents, study of educationally backward and slow learners, and educational therapy for dyslexic children. His interest in the psychiatric problems of mentally retarded children resulted in his lifelong attachment to the Shashi Mangalyam School for mentally subnormal children at Juhu. He also started a special class for children with multiple handicaps at the Dadar School for Blind Children. His interest in the problems of the blind had a personal background. Even as a medical student, he only had ‘tubular vision’. He knew that progressively his vision would diminish and for many years he had only ‘macular vision’. For the last 15 years he was totally blind. The breadth of his vision for child psychiatry and the width of its scope that he developed during his lifetime are all the more remarkable when viewed against the background of his handicap. His progressive blindness forced him to slowly withdraw from his multifarious activities, beginning with the CGC at the J.J. Hospital in 1984. He continued to work at Wadia Hospital till 1990; nearly 30 years of fruitful association. His appointment with the Juhu school was the last that he relinquished, although whenever possible he would make a visit. It is truly amazing how he continued to travel to these different institutions in distant parts of Mumbai often using public transport.

He was always in demand as a teacher for students of psychiatry, social work, nursing, special education, child development and psychology, as well as paediatrics. His case demonstrations at the weekly paediatric meetings were always instructive. He also taught candidates undergoing training to teach the deaf and mute at the EAR centre. TISS published the case records he had collected over the years. Apart from articles in scientific journals, he also wrote in English and Gujarati for lay readers.

In Dr Bhagwandas Shah’s death, Mumbai has lost a stalwart in the field of psychiatry. It is true to say that the void created will not be filled, as no other psychiatrist has chosen to take up child psychiatry. Paediatricians concerned with children’s welfare will miss him the most.

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