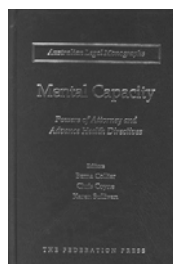


Measuring capacity

Mental capacity: powers of attorney and advance health directives
Berna Collier, Chris Coyne, and Karen Sullivan (editors)

Federation Press, 2005

ISBN: 186287426 3. RRP: \$60.00



EVERY SO OFTEN a book is published that deals with an area of such importance in such a clear and comprehensive way that you wonder why the book has not been written before. *Mental capacity* is such a book. Using a breathtaking breadth of vision, the book draws on the research of lawyers, ethicists, psychiatrists and neuropsychologists to

present a fascinating account of the problems of defining and measuring capacity. The book wisely commences by examining general principles of capacity,

before focusing on individual concerns relating to advance health care planning. It comprises a good mix of prescriptive information combined with case studies to illustrate particular points. The text is meticulously referenced and written in a lucid style.

Given the excellence of the work, criticisms are few in number, and minor in magnitude. On occasion, there is some unnecessary repetition of material in different chapters. For the reader who is not reading the entire book, just selected chapters, this may not be a bad thing. I was also frustrated at the brevity of the concluding chapter — some good points emerged in this chapter which could usefully have been further developed.

Overall, this is a first class book and will be a rich source of material for researchers and practitioners alike.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★

John A Devereux

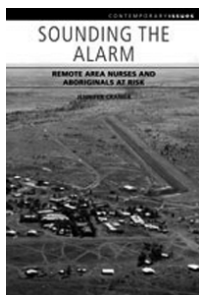
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Distance difficulties

Sounding the alarm: remote area nurses and Aboriginals at risk
Jennifer Cramer

University of Western Australia Press, 2005

ISBN: 1 920694 36 6. RRP: \$38.95



WELL WRITTEN, THIS BOOK shows that two of the most vulnerable groups from either side of the health agenda are at risk. Cramer has identified the professional and personal risks of the health professionals who provide health services to Australia's most disadvantaged group.

In providing service, nurses are put into some of the most difficult situations and have to cope with added stress of providing health care that is outside their training and professional dimensions. Decision making is made difficult by having little or no health history; language barriers; and poor communication with the support service. Prevention and maintenance services are poorly delivered because of lack of time and resources. Visiting medical officers only have enough time to see acute patients, and review of medication is not done. To add to this predicament, the nurses have to

contend with a very mobile community, unable to provide payment and fulfil other commitments of the client.

Their workload and expected duties are not always appreciated by management and other support services. Where there should be two registered nurses, only one is employed. They often have to travel long distances to follow up clients, be on duty for long hours, or participate in community discussions outside the clinic times. The nurses who continue to work in isolated Aboriginal communities are special and over time have developed their practice. The question is, is it best practice or more an ad hoc practice?

Nurses in remote areas work under stressful work and living conditions and continue to provide the only health service for the community, if they don't give up and leave. Nursing in remote Aboriginal communities is not romantic or exotic, but can be rewarding for some of the nurses.

This book should be read by all health care professionals, especially those considering working in rural or remote areas.

Reviewer rating: ★★★☆

Beryl Meiklejohn

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