

Part Three focuses on social relationships that are intimately linked to health. It includes chapters on the health professions (Michael Wearing, Eileen Willis), the body (Erica McWilliam, Rob Irvine), and the relationship between complementary and orthodox medicine (Gary Easthope). Through these chapters, the authors reveal the ways in which power and conflict are central to the relationships that form the basis of health professions and practice.

Inevitably, as in any textbook, there are some issues that could have been covered in more detail. For example, while theoretical debates around risk and individualisation and their implications for health are discussed, they could have been developed more fully through the book. Similarly, the impact of globalisation on health structures and experiences, for example in the context of HIV/AIDS, could have been brought more centrally into the analysis. Further, while the authors provide excellent introductions to contrasting theories within sociology, the challenge for the teacher remains one of how to navigate these different approaches in collaboration with their students.

The book was originally developed to meet the needs of teaching the sociology of health and illness to undergraduate health professionals. With its integration of theory and up-to-date examples, it succeeds admirably at this level. It also works well as a text for students with a stronger grounding in sociology, as I have found in using it as a core text in an undergraduate health sociology subject. The provision of tutorial questions, further research resources, chapter summaries, and an extensive glossary also make the book user-friendly, both for students and their teachers. In an increasingly crowded field of health texts, *Health in Australia* stands out in showing the vital contributions that sociology can make to our understanding of medicine, health and illness, while also acknowledging the challenges it faces.

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*A History of Medical Administration in New South Wales, 1788–1973* (2nd edn). By C. J. Cummins. (Electronically published by NSW Health, Sydney, 2003, at website address: [www.health.nsw.gov.au/history](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/history); originally published by Health Commission of NSW, Sydney, 1979, ISBN 0-7240-3041-7) 224 pp.

DR CYRIL CUMMINS WAS THE LAST DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH in New South Wales, a position he held from 1959 until his unwilling retirement in 1973 when the Department of Health was replaced by

the Health Commission. Concurrently, he held the positions of Chief Medical Officer of the Government, President of the Board of Health, Inspector General of Hospitals and Charities, and Commissioner under the Venereal Diseases Act. For two years he was also Director General of State Psychiatric Services. These responsibilities gave him an unrivalled knowledge of the workings of health administration in the State.

Cummins was offered a sinecure until he reached the official retiring age of sixty, and, to justify this appointment, he was asked by the Health Commission to write a history of government health services since the arrival of the First Fleet. He had previously published several articles dealing with the colonial medical service, so did not need to start from scratch. The finished manuscript was published in a limited edition in typewritten, duplicated foolscap format with a cheap cardboard cover. It was a thematic history divided into two parts, one dealing with the period before 1880, and the second covering the period after the Board of Health was formed.

In due course, the Health Commission itself disappeared, to be replaced by a resurrected Department of Health, now described as 'NSW Health' on its stationery. To commemorate the death of Dr Cummins in 2003, the department republished his book in electronic format, thus ensuring its accessibility to a much wider readership. As a result, it is now more attractive to look at, with photographs of marginal relevance—an illustration of the hairdressing salon at Broughton Hall does not tell us much about mental health care—and copies of health promotion posters from the '30s. It is conveniently presented, too, because each of the major themes forms a discrete PDF file, so that one does not have to download the whole document. Although the new edition benefits from better design and typesetting, the text is virtually identical to the 1979 version.

Sadly, however, the work is seriously flawed and cannot be accepted as a reliable source. Cyril Cummins wrote well, but sometimes let his enthusiasm for the narrative prevail over historical accuracy. Describing the outbreak of smallpox in 1881, he opened the chapter on public health administration: 'The morning of the 25th May 1881 was most unpleasant. A gusty southerly was blowing storm clouds across the harbour and the scudding showers were merging into heavy rain. It was a day of gloomy portent for On Chong in his humble abode... he was an inoffensive Chinamen, one of the many moon-faced coolies who had drifted into Sydney town.' (p. 71) Ignoring for a moment the gratuitous insult to On Chong, who was a prosperous merchant with a brisk trade among visiting shipping, the meteorological records show that it was a warm, still day without rain.

This may be forgiven in the name of poetic licence, but alarm bells ring louder when he gives an incorrect date for the inaugural meeting

of the Board of Health, and the wrong location. Undaunted, he then proceeds to misspell the names of three of the seven men who attended. The minutes of this meeting are held in the State archives, and can easily be checked. These egregious errors may be the result of careless research, possibly by a clerical assistant, but they diminish the credibility of the whole work because every statement needs to be verified against original sources. But it gets worse. There are frequent typographic errors in names and dates that could have been detected during proofreading. The editors of the electronic version have made some minor changes including altered capitalisation, but have also managed to transpose parts of the text into the footnotes, rendering both incomprehensible (e.g., p. 73).

Perhaps the most rewarding feature of the book in both formats is Cummins' account of the machinations of his colleagues. He admits readily that his opinions were coloured by his belief that there was a campaign by politicians and bureaucrats to remove him from office by disbanding the department.

Cummins' analysis is an interesting historical document in its own right, written from the perspective of an aggrieved former employee twenty-five years ago. The Department of Health must be congratulated on republishing it in user-friendly format, but it is pity that it should be presented as a definitive account of the development of health services in NSA when later research has disclosed its weaknesses. This is particularly unfortunate given that in 1998 the department commissioned an experienced professional historian (Rosemary Broomham) to write a comprehensive history, with more apposite illustrations, but did not publish the resulting manuscript. We can hope that this work will eventually appear on the website to give a more balanced view.

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*Paracelsus, the Man who Defied Medicine: His Real Contribution to Medicine and Science.* By Hugh Crone (The Albarello Press, Melbourne, 2004, \$29.95, ISBN 0-646-43327-X)

CRONE'S BOOK IS THE LATEST ADDITION TO THE RATHER MODEST COLLECTION of English works on Paracelsus. It is a broad look at the man and his medical work, and not only places Paracelsus in historical context but examines his contribution to the science of the time. Crone is not a historian. He is a scientist, and this background is utilised in his review of the impact and importance of Paracelsus' theories.