

SHORTER NOTICES

The Discipline of Curiosity. Science in the World edited by Janny Groen, Eefke Smit and Juurd Eijssvoogel (Elsevier Science Publishers, Amsterdam, 1990), pp. vi + 156, \$39.25, ISBN 0-444-88861-6.

This is a first-rate collection of essays about the scientific enterprise in the modern world: about "Communication, health care, transport, trade, industry and countless other aspects of daily life [that] have been drastically and permanently changed as a result of the discoveries made by that disciplined form of human curiosity that we call science" (p.1). The list of contributors is a distinguished one, including Alexander King, Erich Bloch, Etienne Davignon, Robert Solow, Hisao Yamada, Roger Penrose.

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Telemedicine in Australia: A Discussion Paper by Bernard L. Crowe (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, 1993), pp. iii + 60. ISBN 0-642-19028.

The development of telemedicine technology in Australia provides the opportunity for medical practice to be transformed from isolated individual encounters, to a nationally and internationally integrated medical system. Telemedicine has been made possible by the advent of powerful neural computer technology, combined with artificial intelligence and high speed telecommunications capabilities. Such a system purports to provide a link between general practitioners, specialists and patients through a communications network, with an emphasis on the availability of diagnostic images and reports, and assistance in diagnosis and medical education through computer based information retrieval systems.

This paper aims to raise not only practical problems, but legal and ethical issues concerning the widespread access to medical information that this system would involve. Of concern are issues of patient privacy, accessibility of the system to authorised and unauthorised users, the practical concerns of implementation and the possible ramifications for legal procedures. Based on several telemedicine pilot projects, it is possible to project the majority of the costs and benefits of this system. An evaluation of these would be the natural precursor to its implementation on a national scale.

SJ.