WHY NOT?

Why not use local maps in general practice?

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One of the first problems to be faced by members of a primary health care team when joining a new practice is to find their way around the area.

In a town practice it is usually possible to buy a street map, but a rural practice may consist largely of villages, for which maps naming the roads are not available.

In the Beckington practice, patients are distributed through 24 villages, with a number living in Frome (for which maps are obtainable commercially). Ten of the villages are so small that directions to a patient's house can be followed from an Ordnance Survey map. However, in the remaining villages there are named streets, which are sometimes difficult to find.

For these 14 villages I have prepared large-scale drawings (Figure 1). With the help of the partners, practice staff, patients, and from my own observations, I have named all streets and included a number of landmarks. The maps have then been traced on to a Gestetner stencil, and from this copies have been made.

The maps have proved to be helpful in a number of ways. The partners and trainee use them when visiting patients, while their wives have copies at home to help when taking directions for visits. The practice nurses have found them useful when a student midwife is attached to the practice, and copies can be supplied to medical students visiting the practice. The series of maps has been sent to the local ambulance stations to help them in finding the more difficult parts of the area. The partners' houses have been included in the maps and this may be helpful when directing visitors. They should also be of considerable benefit to the patients in that doctors and ambulances will be able to reach their houses quickly in an emergency.

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