

ACCESSIBILITY AND UTILIZATION

Geographical perspectives on health care delivery

Alun E. Joseph and
David R. Phillips

Harper and Row,
London (1984)

214 pages. Price £6.50 (paperback)

This book is concerned with geographical aspects of health care systems and, within this broad orientation, a major focus is on primary health care. While the main aim of the authors is to provide an undergraduate text for geography courses it is also intended to be 'a resource book to which non-specialist geographers, social scientists and professionals involved in the provision of health and other public services can refer'. It certainly fulfils this limited function quite adequately although I suspect that both social scientists and health administrators will find it rather frustrating, but for different reasons.

Where it is useful is in providing a guide to recent research on the way in which spatial and social factors affect access to medical facilities and raising many of the complex theoretical and methodological issues involved in such research. For example, there is a chapter on health care delivery systems comparing countries at different levels of economic development and different political leanings and highlighting the way their systems have evolved and the implications for patient utilization. Other chapters deal with physical accessibility to services, reviewing such topics as factors influencing physical location, regional availability measures and introducing such concepts as 'distance decay'. Social scientists from other disciplines will find this a useful introduction to the perspective of the medical geographer although they may not be so impressed by its potential for explaining utilization when compared with the range of other socioeconomic variables known to influence utilization (these are also competently reviewed).

Health planners, however, will look in vain for any easy solution to the problems of siting services and reconciling the demands of consumers, professional and limited resources. They are more likely to be left with an overwhelming impression of the immense complexity of the issues and retreat yet again to a simplistic approach. The authors themselves maintain that for planning purposes a great deal more basic information and theory is needed on variables which influence access and utilization in established systems and about

their interlinkages. This book is an indication of how far we still have to go.

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SPORTS INJURIES

Malcolm Read with Paul Wade

Breslich and Foss,
London (1984)

160 pages. Price £8.50 (hardback),
£4.95 (paperback)

With unemployment, redundancy and early retirement at epidemic levels and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, one of the fastest growing industries is that of sport and recreation.

Sports medicine, though perhaps still in its infancy (the first fellowship in sports medicine to be held in Britain was elected in Cambridge in 1978), is a distinct medical entity. It concerns itself with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of injuries in sport. Practitioners in this specialty require not only special judgement and experience in relation to the injuries themselves, but also an apposite knowledge of the sports involved.

There is a scarcity of books about sports medicine and certainly this one, written for sportsmen and women of every activity, will find an important place in the library of many. While it is written for the lay person, much of the contents will be most useful to the general practitioner. The authors are well qualified to write such a book. Paul Wade is a freelance sports journalist, and Malcolm Read, a general practitioner, is an ex-Olympic hockey player who subsequently became an appointed doctor to the national teams at both Commonwealth and Olympic Games.

The book is in six sections. Avoidance of injuries has, quite rightly, pride of place in the first section; the authors reinforce the importance of this by stating that 80 per cent of sports injuries are preventable. Warming up and stretching exercises are explained and illustrated. There is an A to Z of sensible tips—about age, alcohol, altitude, dehydration, diarrhoea, diet, menstruation, teeth protection and so on. Included in this section are some simple early remedies.

The second section is short and gives another A to Z of common medical conditions and treatments relevant to the athlete. It describes the different forms of treatment, their use and how they work.

Section three, the largest section of the book, gives the reader a 'top to toe' guide to injuries. Each anatomical area (head, neck, shoulder, elbow, wrist, hand, back etc.) is reviewed, although fractures are excluded. Diagnosis, cause, treatment and rehabilitation training for each injury are described. It is in this section that the interested general practitioner would gain much useful information. Here can be found a comprehensive catalogue of the recognition and management of conditions that in general practice may be seen infrequently but should be diagnosed and treated.

In section four, Malcolm Read describes training 'ladders' for rehabilitation of various injuries. How often is a patient given a specific pattern of exercises to follow? Here may be followed a routine which should prevent early recurrence of such injuries as, say, a torn muscle. The 'ladders' lead the athlete to safe and quicker recovery. Who has ever met an athlete with patience?

The penultimate section gives a sport by sport guide to injuries related to each particular sport. Archers, athletes, canoeists, bowlers, cricketers, baseball players and others can read about the do's and don't's of their sport.

The book ends with a final A to Z of medical terms, perhaps useful to the lay reader. The list is not comprehensive and the space might have been used for a full index for the whole book. However, I recommend it to players and doctors alike. With modern communication of and interest in all things medical we find that too often the patient may have more recent information than his doctor: so avoid this and look at the book.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

THE ARTHRITIS BOOK. A guide for patients and their families, Ephraim P. Engleman and Milton Silverman, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1984. 89 pages. Price £1.95.

ABC OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES. Articles from BMJ, Michael W. Adler, British Medical Journal, London, 1984. 56 pages. Price £4.00.

HOSPITAL MEDICINE AND NURSING IN THE 1980s. Interaction between the professions of medicine and nursing, Archie Duncan and Gordon McLachlan (editors), Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London, 1984. 126 pages. Price £5.00.