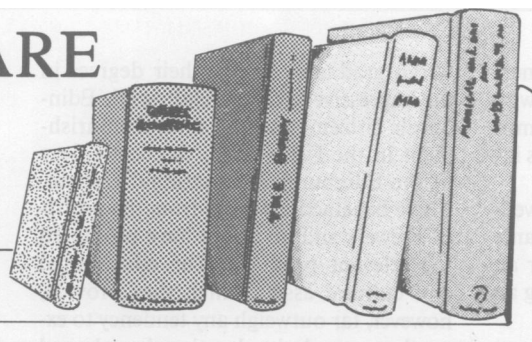


PRIMARY CARE BOOK SHELF



PROMOTING HEALTH THROUGH PARTICIPATION

Experience of groups for patient participation in general practice

Ann Richardson and Caroline Bray

Policy Studies Institute, London (1987)

78 pages. Price £5.95

The title of this short monograph might suggest that patient participation groups are an active part of the health promotion movement. Sadly, the conclusion drawn from the authors' survey of the 63 groups in the United Kingdom is that only a minority seem to be contributing to health promotion in any real sense. Two-thirds of the groups identified are 'active' while a sixth are 'highly active' and another sixth are 'close to giving up'. Some groups seem to exist mainly to provide feedback from patients for the doctors in the practice, others carry out fund-raising or voluntary work. Many do carry out some 'health education' activities, but the picture is not particularly rosy. They frequently have difficulty recruiting new members to help run the groups.

The authors conclude: 'there is no doubt that the very conception of patient participation is "odd" ... There is lack of clarity about what patient participation is supposed to do'. Perhaps one should also add that there is still a lack of clarity about the concept of health promotion. Until primary care practitioners in the UK fully understand the importance of community participation in health promotion, patient participation groups will continue to flicker in uncertainty at the periphery of primary care. Potentially they could act as a vital bridge between the community health movement and primary care, and an important catalyst in furthering health promotion.

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HEALTH PROMOTION IN NORTH AMERICA

Implications for the UK

Christopher Robins (Ed)

Health Education Council, King Edward's Fund for London, London (1987)

154 pages. Price £7.50

In October 1985 a study tour of Canada and the USA was organized jointly by the Health Education Council and King's Fund for 13 people who, in their various fields, have shown a commitment to health promotion. *Health promotion in North America* is a compilation of the original papers given on the tour and material from a workshop held later in London. It does not attempt to say how health promotion should be practised in the UK. Rather it shows the way in which health promotion has developed in North America. The book explains how a national commitment to health promotion has been developed alongside local community projects, a so-called patch planning approach to community health. Chapters on primary care, teenagers, older people, community development, and broadcasting, all with respect to health education and health promo-

tion give a fascinating picture of what is currently happening in North America and at the end of each chapter there is a summary of implications for the UK. On reading this book one begins to understand why it is that the Americans are having greater success in health promotion than we are in the UK.

All general practitioners interested in the philosophy and practice of health of promotion, especially those involved in planning health promotion at any level, should read this stimulating book.

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HEALTH CARE INFORMATION

Report of a Joint Working Group of the Korner Committee on Health Service Information and the Faculty of Community Medicine. Occasional paper 8

D.G. Knox (Ed)

Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, London (1987)

88 pages. Price £2.00

The Steering Group on Health Services Information (the Korner Steering Group) was established in February 1980 to look at the acquisition of basic information necessary for the effective management of the NHS at district level. Although its recommendations will be implemented in 1987 concern that the reports failed to meet the demands of longer term strategic planning and the specific information needs of community physicians led to the setting up of a working party to examine these reservations. Their report has now been published by the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust.

The early chapters of the report outline the principles and objectives by which the group worked. Subsequent chapters look at professional roles and service needs, information systems and information sources. The efficiencies of the steering group reports are considered in detail and supplementary recommendations are made.

As a unit general manager, I have become acutely aware of the lack of information on which to base rational management decisions. It is easy with hindsight to be critical of the Korner reports. Certainly they have their deficiencies but they did begin to look at the needs of those charged with the management of the National Health Service.

This report of the joint working group concludes that the Korner recommendations should be implemented but should be clearly seen as interim measures to be built upon so that future planning can be based on a much more effective foundation.

This booklet deserves to be studied by all general practitioners concerned with the management and future planning of our health service, whether at district, regional or family practitioner committee level.

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