



MANAGING TO BE A BETTER DOCTOR

Proceedings of a conference on medical education and health care strategies in a changing National Health Service

MSD Foundation, London (1990)

59 pages. Price £15.00

This publication contains a collection of papers from a conference organized by the MSD Foundation. The papers, by some of the most eminent authors of our time, are arranged in three sections: 'The doctor and his tasks', 'The doctor and his career', 'The profession and society'. Each of the sections contains several excellent, thought-provoking papers, followed by an outline of the discussion at the conference. The papers raise many controversial issues including the education and training of doctors and the distribution of resources for patient care.

Managing to be a better doctor brings together so many ideas that it would be an important addition to any postgraduate library, for all branches of the profession, and vital reading for managers in the health service. As the papers challenge many of the traditions of medical education this volume would also be an asset to any training practice and important reading for those involved in medical education. It is unfortunate that such meritorious writing is contained in a rather unprepossessing cover which does not invite the reader to open it, and which may allow it to be lost on the library shelves.

JACKY HAYDEN

General practitioner, Bury, Lancashire

GP BUDGET HOLDING IN THE UK

Lessons from America

Jonathan P Weiner and David M Ferriss

King's Fund Institute, London (1990)

36 pages. Price £5.95

The proposals for fund holding in British general practice are loosely based on the American experience of health maintenance organizations. In common with other developed countries, the UK is facing an ever increasing proportion of its gross domestic product being spent on health care and the attraction of restraining that budgetary growth by placing cost responsibility on the cost generator is intense. In this research report, the two Anglophile American authors recount the experience of health maintenance organizations and draw conclusions about our impending changes.

While supporting the desired outcomes they outline the problems that may be encountered. In particular they emphasize the possible deleterious effects on the doctor-patient relationship in primary care, they are concerned about the feasibility of risk sharing in a pool of patients as small as 11 000 and they

highlight the inadequacy of current management systems in primary care. Like many before them they make an eloquent plea for pilot studies and evaluations.

A year ago the content of this paper would have seemed arcane to most practitioners: now it is vitally relevant. Those who are electing to hold a budget and those who are likely to find themselves holding a budget before long, willing or not, should read it to understand the origins and pitfalls of this 'experiment without evaluation'.

MIKE PRINGLE

Senior lecturer in general practice, Nottingham University

MANAGING ANXIETY

A training manual

Helen Kennerley

Oxford University Press (1990)

177 pages. Price £10.95

Anxious patients can be treated in many ways and as general practitioners we have numerous opportunities for exercising our therapeutic skills. Tranquillizers have had a bad press lately so it is good to be reminded that psychological methods have been steadily simplified over the years, are at least as effective as drug treatment and are a good deal safer.

This deceptively slim volume is addressed to all members of the primary care team who wish to develop skills in anxiety management training. The physical symptoms, worrying thoughts and psychomotor behaviour associated with anxiety are carefully explained and illustrated in four typical but fictional cases. The problems are examined in a clear and ordered way and the formulation of conclusions are shared with the client who can then be offered a personal treatment programme, including carefully planned homework between the sessions. A range of therapeutic approaches is described and their practical application is explained with admirable clarity. The book includes sample diary sheets and scripts for making relaxation tapes. In addition, there are nine information sheets for clients to reinforce the recommended homework. It is all well presented with helpful summaries at the end of each short section. At the end of the volume are fuller references both to the technical literature and to books and organizations that clients might find useful.

This book shows exactly how to go about helping anxious and phobic patients. It is so well explained that even beginners might feel tempted to try out some of these ideas.

OLIVER SAMUEL

General practice trainer, Pinner