



DIABETES IN PRACTICE

Henry Connor and Andrew J M Boulton

John Wiley, Chichester (1990)

171 pages. Price £15.95

I must admit that when I was asked to review this book, my heart sank. First, it is a book for general practitioners and their practice nurses, and I am doubtful that they have equal needs. Secondly, it is a book written for general practitioners by hospital specialists.

I persevered with it, however, and was pleasantly surprised. The book is well written, easy to read and in the main informative. The text is well structured, with important points highlighted, and is of real practical value to general practitioners. It is the most accessible and relevant book on the subject that I have come across to date.

The book inevitably has its weaknesses. These, I would suggest, primarily result from the lack of any input from a general practitioner. For example, there is no discussion of the value or otherwise of repeat prescribing in diabetic patients, there is no reference to the financial implications for a practice which takes on the care of its diabetic patients and the authors did not point out that the main reason for having organized care of diabetic patients in general practice is that random, non-structured care does not work and results in higher morbidity and mortality.

On completing the book I felt a fleeting pang of despair. It is a shame that in clinical subjects, we still appear to be dependent on our hospital colleagues for such texts. Things are changing and no doubt the time will come when two general practitioners will write a text on the management of diabetic patients in hospital, intended for hospital consultants and their ward nurses.

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GUIDELINES FOR CHANGE IN POSTGRADUATE AND CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

Rodney Gale and Janet Grant

The Joint Centre for Educational Research and Development in Medicine, London (1990)

91 pages. Price £9.60

This publication is the final report of a project on the management of change in medical education, one of the aims of the project being to devise a set of practical guidelines for use by those intending to introduce change in postgraduate and continuing medical education.

The research method used consisted of semi-structured interviews with some 55 people chosen from the ranks of general

practitioners, hospital consultants, clinical tutors, deans/advisers, government officials and the royal colleges. The size of the sample and the fact that most of the doctors came from one regional health authority does cast doubt over the representativeness of the group, and the similarity of the individual points of view indicate that either there is a general consensus or that consensus exists because most of the participants come from the same part of the country. Among the 16 most frequently mentioned factors in the management of change were consultation, talking to people and explaining the change, teamwork, ownership of change and constraints of time.

A model of change emerged from the analysis of the interviews, which the authors quite rightly emphasize should not be considered as a blueprint but as a kind of checklist. This model has three main components — professional characteristics and styles, core activities and tactical choices and styles. Under each component, a detailed list of guidelines is given.

Although there is little doubt that the book serves its purpose of providing some clear guidelines for those engaged in the management of change in medical education, it has a *deja vu* feel about it. This might be due to the fact that most of the ideas seem to be common sense and have already been used by those in positions of power and responsibility. However, I recommend the book to those who know little of such matters. If time is short, a condensed version is available from the same publisher entitled *Managing change in a medical context: guidelines for action*.

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THE NEW PRACTICE MANAGER

Michael Drury (ed)

Radcliffe, Oxford (1990)

248 pages. Price £12.50

One of the many new challenges in the development of primary care is the need to apply modern management techniques to everyday general practice. This change has occurred so rapidly that there has not been time to train a new generation of practice managers and at present we are either developing the management skills of those reception staff already in post or training those with previous management experience in the complex workings of general practice. As well as dealing effectively with such issues, this book provides comprehensive descriptions of general medical practice today, the basic nature of management and administration and their application in a general practice setting.

A section on 'managing the team' provides a far-sighted view of the demotivating effect that the new contract could have in