



SMOKING CESSATION INTERVENTIONS: IS PATIENT EDUCATION EFFECTIVE?

Diana Saunders

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (1992)
68 pages. Price £10.00

This comprehensive review of the effectiveness of interventions to help patients stop smoking will be of value to anyone planning anti-smoking programmes. As I read the book, I realized how little use is made of research and how even simple messages get lost in the bureaucracy of health promotion bands, target groups and forms to complete.

Diana Saunders has put together clear evidence that brief advice in general practice consultations is effective and will help about 3% of smokers to stop for at least a year. We can improve on this by offering health education booklets and emphasizing the short term advantages of stopping smoking rather than dwelling on the long term dangers. Negotiating a date to stop, warning smokers that they will be asked about their progress when they next attend and arranging follow-up appointments can also help those who want to stop. Nicotine gum seems more effective when used in a clinic or a group than in general practice, but can be valuable for smokers who are very dependent on nicotine, if used properly. Patches may prove more helpful, but only limited evidence of their effectiveness was available in 1991 when this review was written.

The big issue when it comes to putting this research into practice is how to motivate professionals to continue with their interventions — even if 5% of our patients stop, 19 out of 20 will continue smoking. Training, feedback on smoking rates and stickers in the notes can all be helpful and should feature prominently in programmes to help professionals tackle smoking.

This book offers the opportunity to learn from other people's experiences. Any practice applying for recognition of their health promotion work under the government's new payment system will need to tackle smoking and this review should help them to do so more effectively.

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PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN THE ARAB WORLD

W J Stephen

Somerset House, Wells (1992)
314 pages. Price £20.00

Dr Stephen has made a brave attempt to fill a gap in the literature on health care provision. The Arab world needs interpreters who understand the rapid pace of development and the need for sustainable health provision, and this is particularly true for primary

health care. However, with such a broad brief — providing baseline information, removing prejudices, assisting health care planners, stimulating discussion and highlighting problems of relationships between developing and developed world — Dr Stephen could only provide a sketch.

What emerges is a collage: a restatement of the principles of primary health care alongside descriptions of health care structure and process. The true picture cannot emerge from brief forays by a non-arabic speaking researcher; ideally Dr Stephen should have lived in and experienced Arabic culture before writing the book. *Primary health care in the Arab world* is aimed at people in ministerial positions in those countries. It would probably make difficult reading for those with English as a second language.

A wealth of information is crammed into 314 pages (there are 20 pages of references). However, the headings fail to catch the eye and there are no maps. Only the tables are easy to refer to, although the author admits that the information they contain is often unreliable. Those considering a visit to the Middle East may wish to browse through this book — Dr Stephen's personal assessments of each country provide convenient cameos.

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PARTNERSHIPS: CAN WE TALK? (video)

Royal College of General Practitioners and MSD Foundation
RCGP, London (1993)

72 pages (course book). Price £45.00

Most of us have experience of the many problems which lie beneath the exterior veneer of medical partnerships. This programme brings them out into the open and explores relationships within partnerships and in the primary health care team, postulating that an ability to work in harmony in partnership to achieve practice aims will result in better quality patient care. The package comprises a course book, a video and a copy of the practice annual report pertaining to a mythical, but all too familiar, Appleby Road practice, which is setting out to appoint a replacement partner. It is designed for use by various groups in the practice and during training and continuing medical education.

The course book has three main sections. The commentary and script section is used in conjunction with the video. It is unfortunate that the video commentator metamorphoses the retiring partner, Margaret Jeffrey into Margaret Jones, but the commentary relates to the interactions in the video sequences and asks pertinent questions of participants as to what is happening and how this relates to personal experience. The video is excellent and holds the attention completely.