



PARTNERSHIP WITH PATIENTS. A practical guide to starting a patient participation group

Peter Pritchard

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1993)

25 pages. Price £6.00

I have been an admirer of Peter Pritchard since the start of patient participation groups in the early 1970s. No one has done more to promote their establishment, and no one more effectively than in this little guide. His lifelong experience of general practice, his breadth of mind, his aptitude for organization and his writing talent all combine to make this a readable, and immensely practical, starting point for all who need to know about patient participation; and that means just about everyone connected with general practice. For some unaccountable reason patients themselves are omitted from the intended readership.

After some historical details, the guide sets out what patient participation can achieve: ensuring compatible goals, eliciting patients' views on services, helping under-served groups, linking with other networks, dealing with suggestions and complaints, offering health promotion, influencing other organizations, and supporting the work of the practice. After a brief look at the evaluation of groups, *Partnership with patients* goes on to describe other spin-offs such as developing an empathic organization, adapting to change, encouraging open medicine, providing resources and improving quality of care. Some of the obstacles are addressed including professional attitudes, advertising, and confidentiality. The booklet ends with detailed advice about the logistics of starting a group, and lists those organizations, such as the National Association for Patient Participation, which can help to make it a success.

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STOP SMOKING (video)

Geoff Graham

Abbey Productions, Whitby (1992)

Running time 45 minutes. Price £13.99

This video comes amid the growing mountain of self-help material that is currently available for smokers who wish to quit. The programme is presented by, and based on, the work of Geoff Graham who is currently president of the British Society of Medical and Dental Hypnosis. The video commences by describing some of the well known health risks associated with smoking. Geoff Graham then proceeds to use the technique of neuro-linguistic programming, in which viewers are presented with a series of images on which they are asked to reflect. It is made clear that this suggestive imagery is not the same as a formal

trance, but helps to encourage 'use of all your senses to make positive programmes in your mind'. Although the images are presented to smokers in a sequential way that progressively emphasizes their own ability to overcome the smoking habit, I found the visual presentation rather tedious and uninteresting. A few specific strategies were provided for helping individuals who had quit to cope with situations where they may be more inclined to want a cigarette, such as early in the morning or at meal times.

The only evidence that this particular technique may be effective as a smoking cessation method were the anecdotal reports of the presenter who claims that he has helped over 1000 of his private patients to become non-smokers. These claims were supported by testimonials from three former smokers who appeared on several occasions during the video.

In summary, this video may appeal to some smokers who have tried unsuccessfully to use other methods of quitting, and are still motivated to quit. They would obviously require the ability to understand and visualize the images that are presented. From that point of view it may be a useful video to recommend or make available to selected patients. However, before recommending widespread usage it is essential that there is sound scientific evidence, from randomized controlled trials, that this particular method is effective.

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HEALTH CHECKS FOR PEOPLE AGED 75 AND OVER

Occasional paper 59

E I Williams and P Wallace (eds)

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1993)

30 pages. Price £9.00

This is something of a departure from the usual style of occasional papers. It is a practical compilation of useful assessment tools for assessing the health needs of people in the community. Taking as its starting point the contractual requirements for the assessment of people aged 75 years and over by general practitioners in the National Health Service, it builds on the reviews and recommendations in this area of clinical practice which are contained in *Occasional papers 35 and 45, Preventive care of the elderly: a review of current developments* and *Care of older people: a framework for progress*. The extensive research and practical experience of the authors is evident from the way in which they set out a clear strategy for monitoring the health of older people in the community. The most useful standardized and validated measures of dementia, depression, disability and dependency are included as appendices.

The authors endorse previous recommendations which advocated a stepwise approach to assessment so that most attention is