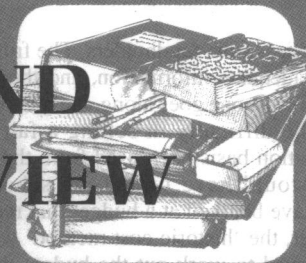




BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW



SHARED CARE FOR DIABETES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Occasional paper 67

P M Greenhalgh

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1994)

35 pages. Price £9.90 (RCGP members £9.00)

Do you want to know how and why shared care works and why it often does not? Tricia Greenhalgh's review will give you the answers in the context of patients with diabetes.

The 23 pages (plus appendices) take only a few enjoyable hours to read but provide a comprehensive, up-to-date, critical appraisal of the field. The methodology of the Cochrane Collaboration was used (as far as possible) to analyse five randomized controlled trials, five non-randomized trials and 14 descriptive studies.

The strengths and weaknesses of each study are discussed and summarized in tables. Recommendations on basics such as the three Rs (registration, recall and regular review) and a need for care to be truly 'shared and not shifted' are cogently argued. This will be of assistance to many of us who are grappling with such problems in the shifting sands of the purchaser-provider divide. Perhaps the brevity of the book does not do justice to the topic? Perhaps the findings relate only to some diabetic patients and some districts in certain practices? I think not. This is a valuable addition to the literature which challenges all of us who want to provide effective care for patients with chronic disease. The effect on the reader is likely to last longer than the few hours spent on its perusal.

FRANK M SULLIVAN

*Senior lecturer, Department of General Practice,
University of Glasgow*

DOCTORS AND THEIR CAREERS: A NEW GENERATION

Isobel Allen

Policy Studies Institute, London (1994)

292 pages. Price £19.95

'Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose'

My brother and I entered medical school on the same day in 1955 as second and first year students, respectively, so I read this book with the pattern of our subsequent careers in mind. Isobel Allen's book is a follow up to her 1988 study of doctors and their careers carried out by the independent Policy Studies Institute. It describes the experiences of doctors who qualified in 1986 five years on and what is remarkable is how little has changed in the 30 years since I qualified, and what has changed seems to have been for the worst.

The almost non-existence of part-time posts, the lack of recognition for time spent and experience gained in such posts,

the long hours as junior doctors on call in dismal hospital accommodation and the absence of a well-structured career and personal counselling service are characteristics now of the postgraduate years as they have always been for the vast majority of doctors. Women doctors are still seriously disadvantaged in their pathway to the top jobs of consultant and general practitioner principal.

Isobel Allen's clear and concise summary of her meticulously designed study, which achieved a response rate of over 80% from the 286 doctors surveyed, provides a strong message to influence the policy decisions that need to be taken to improve 'the methods by which society manages and nurtures young doctors and medical students'. It is disappointing to find, therefore, that the similarly forceful messages from her previous study have so far evoked few positive benefits, although some tentative steps have been taken in the right direction. Her suggestion of the appointment of career advisers within medical schools, independent of the academic establishment, who would be available to give constructive and informed advice to undergraduate and postgraduate students and who would offer to visit schools to talk to prospective medical students applicants could provide the more positive support needed.

Doctors and the careers: a new generation should be required reading, therefore, for all who have a responsibility for the welfare of those already in the profession and particularly for those contemplating joining its ranks. Although medicine continues to offer a relatively secure and well-paid job, without informed advice parents and teachers are likely to continue to suggest that it is still the goal for the brightest and best students, unaware of the disillusionment that awaits many of them.

ELAN PRESTON-WHYTE

*Lecturer, Department of General Practice,
University of Leicester*

IMPLEMENTING GP FUNDHOLDING: WILD CARD OR WINNING HAND?

*Howard Glennerster, Manos Matsaganis and Patricia Owens
with Stephanie Hancock*

Open University Press, Buckingham (1994)

205 pages. Price £37.50 (h/b), £12.99 (p/b)

Those who want to understand the general practitioner fundholding scheme will find this book invaluable: those who want to evaluate it may find it lacking. The subtitle 'wild card or winning hand?' betrays the problem. Professor Glennerster and colleagues have looked at fundholding from the fundholder's perspective and, just as those who win at poker ignore the consequences for those they bankrupt, they have missed the problems fundholding has caused the National Health Service.

On the plus side, the book offers a detailed analysis of the scheme, what its promoters set out to achieve, and the experiences