



BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW

HEALTH OUTCOME MEASURES IN PRIMARY AND OUTPATIENT CARE

A Hutchinson, E McCall, M Christie, and C Riccalton (eds)

Harwood Academic Publishers, Amsterdam 1996

216 pages

ISBN 9783718659005

Health outcome means the impact of health care, or a lack thereof, on the well-being and quality-of-life of patients. In this volume, it is clearly shown that assessment of health outcome, by means of clinical audit, is becoming a recognized component of the evaluation and monitoring of health care in Britain and the United States. General practitioners (GPs), particularly fundholders, are increasingly asking for evidence of the effectiveness of health care interventions and packages of care available before placing contracts.

Health and illness are complex concepts, and their measurement in biomedical terms requires a mix of scientific, theoretical, practical, and economic approaches. The authors, from a variety of fields, demonstrate the state of the art, particularly in chapters related to health care commissioning, nursing, chronic diseases (particularly asthma), and cross-cultural issues. Tables and figures add to the clarity of presentation and the text deals with the philosophy and practical know-how of the subject.

The chapter on cross-cultural issues in outcome measurement deals with European countries only. It reminded me of a European habit in that when the French get together with the English, Germans, and Americans, they call it a world-conference. Nevertheless, many service GPs might find the text somewhat heavy reading, but it is a useful resource for GPs of the fundholding kind.

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RESEARCH METHODS IN PRIMARY CARE

Yvonne Carter and Cathryn Thomas (eds)

Foreword by Michael Drury

Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford and New York 1996

200 pages, price £18.50

ISBN 1857751981

It is a pleasure to see that this impressive book is edited by two young GP researchers: Yvonne Carter, professor at St Bartholomew's and the Royal London, and Cathryn Thomas at Birmingham University.

The authors are drawn mostly from departments of general practice and they write with the insight that comes from hands-on experience. The book is attractively laid out and can be read through as an overview of research skills relevant to primary care, or pored over for details on questionnaire design or on meta-analysis. Practical topics such as 'getting started', 'getting funded', and 'getting published' are not neglected, nor are the 'hot' topics of using

microcomputers or on-line research.

The emergence of this text from general practice at this time may be significant for the discipline as well as for individual researchers. The publishers clearly see a market among GPs for such a book against the backdrop of a primary care led National Health Service (NHS) and the need for GP management to be soundly based on evidence. Over 90% of contact between doctors and patients in the NHS takes place in general practice, yet research is regarded as a minority interest by GPs. Much necessary research is still done by those from other disciplines.

This book is full of the excitement and enthusiasm of GP research. It nicely compliments John Howie's *Research in General Practice*, and is thoroughly recommended. I think Will Pickles would have been pleased!

ALASTAIR F WRIGHT

Editor, British Journal of General Practice

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