

Out of Hours Books

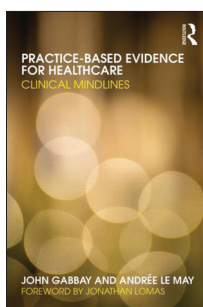
HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN

Practice-based Evidence for Healthcare Clinical Mindlines

John Gabbay and Andrée le May

Routledge, 2011

PB, 276pp, £28.99, 978-0415486699



A book that begins with a fragment of a Leonard Cohen song is unlikely to be all bad, and this one is pretty good. Published 3 years ago, it deserves rereading or reading for the first time by anyone with an interest in how research evidence gets into clinical practice — precisely the theme of this month's *BJGP*. John Gabbay is a distinguished health services researcher and Andrée le May is professor of nursing at Southampton. Together they have produced a book which is remarkable in many ways, not least in the way that it wears its scholarship lightly and contains, on almost every page, an observation, reflection, or idea to which any practising GP will relate.

At the core of the book is the concept of clinical mindlines; the complex, interwoven threads of information, experience, education, and evidence that act as internalised and highly personal clinical guidelines and heuristics that underlie and, importantly, continually interact with patient management. Using data collected in their own revealing and detailed ethnographic research carried out in four disparate general practices, and drawing on a range of social theory, Gabbay and le May map out the complex territory lying between the publication of research evidence and its application to real-world general practice.

Science, evidence, and published guidelines interact with many other factors such as local norms and routines, tacit and experiential knowledge, peer values, institutional culture and role modelling. We are taken on an exciting intellectual and

professional journey through the growth and nourishment of mindlines and on to the development of communities of practice and the co-creation of clinical reality. There is an extremely useful concluding chapter, with important summary points for the improvement of practice-based evidence. The accompanying notes on each chapter are almost as interesting as the chapters themselves, and there is an excellent bibliography. Gabbay and le May have come as close as anything I've read to explaining exactly how, as Leonard Cohen has it, 'the light gets in'.

Roger Jones,

BJGP Editor, London.

E-mail: rjones@rcgp.org.uk

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X679822

USEFUL COLLECTION — OR PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITY?

Unequal Health, The Scandal of Our Times

Danny Dorling

Policy Press, 2013

PB, 400pp, £19.99, 978-1447305132



Danny Dorling is professor of geography at Oxford University. This book is a collection of articles showing his view, as a geographer, on the social determinants of health. His thesis is that greater social inequality in a country (largely income inequality) is positively correlated with poorer health outcomes.

This is not simply due to increased poverty. Health outcomes are worse for the rich as well. In recent years inequality has increased in the UK, as a 'greed is good' culture has taken hold. The welfare state hasn't compensated for the adverse effects

and this book does offer some fascinating insights. I especially enjoyed the piece about the life expectancy you lose by smoking a cigarette (calculated at 11 minutes). This edition is largely a collection of work previously published elsewhere, some as long ago as 2000, and much is available online. There are around 30 000 new words and as might be expected from an academic geographer, there are many maps and tables. Sadly, these are difficult to interpret and the colour versions, included in a plates section, are too small (they are available at Worldmapper.org or at dannydorling.org and are better on screen).

Although it's useful to have all these articles together, the subject of inequality and health was, in my opinion, addressed better in Dorling's previous book *Injustice*. I wasn't sure who this book was for; perhaps for the training practice library to remind registrars and their elders about determinants of health other than medicine?

There is one further curiosity. In a chapter about distortion of data in graphs there is an illustration of Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* which, famously, includes a distorted skull. There is no explanation as to why the picture is there.

If you are interested, there are good lectures on Youtube from Canal Educatif¹ or John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*² that beautifully illustrate how a different viewpoint can lead to different conclusions.

David Syme,

GP, Killin Perthshire.

E-mail: david.syme@nhs.net

REFERENCES

1. ArtSleuth 6: HOLBEIN — The Ambassadors (final version) – National Gallery, London. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MR-skVRPdg> (accessed 14 Apr 2014).
2. John Berger / Ways of Seeing, Episode 3 (1972). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7wi8jd7aC4> (accessed 14 Apr 2014).

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp14X679831