Genuine solutions to pressure in the workplace

Staff Support in Health Care is written at a time of growing demand for organisations to consider seriously the psychological health of their staff. Sadly, this interest is often not translated into effective measures for employees. So, David Stoter has written this book, based on his experiences of working with and supporting healthcare workers.

The book discusses the nature of stress and identifies the common sources of pressure familiar to healthcare staff. A problem with many books on stress, is that they tend to focus on the individual perspective, concentrating on the development and implementation of coping mechanisms to enable individuals to manage their own stress.

This book, however, offers real solutions to managing pressure at three levels – personal, within a group and within organisations. It presents a practical framework for developing a caring work culture. Its approach is also aimed at different grades of staff and offers perspectives on staff support for learners, practitioners and managers.

The text is divided into short chapters, grouped into five sections, each of which addresses a different approach to staff support. While the book may be used as a reference text, it is not written in an overly academic style and could be used for both professional and personal development. Key points are identified at the end of each chapter along with a short exercise, both of which would be useful for the reader using the text as a learning tool.

One of the qualities of the book is that it is relevant to workers in and outside the health service. Although it is aimed primarily at healthcare workers, the author's recommendations for creating a healthy and effective working environment will be appropriate to staff in many other organisations.

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General Practice: Essential Facts
Richard Jones, Scott Menzies
Radcliffe Medical Press
106pp
£17.95

Any primary healthcare professional would find the information in this book useful even though it is directed at GPs. The book condenses facts and figures about general practice in the NHS and includes data on population morbidity and mortality as well as GP characteristics and distribution.

There are, however, a number of omissions. Understanding the context in which GPs and other primary care staff work should include more than just facts and figures; an appreciation of the qualitative development of primary care practice is essential as primary care groups and clinical governance begin to take shape.

The book fails to include details about the district-wide services on which general practice relies, such as clinical nurse specialists, continence services, 24-hour nursing services, school nursing and equipment loan services.

Also omitted is any discussion of the importance of audit, service evaluation or the use of clinical guidelines as they will apply in the immediate future.

For anyone unfamiliar with general practice, or perhaps about to start work in the community, this would be a useful reference book. It also gives some idea of the attitudes and priorities of GPs, an understanding of which are essential for anyone working in primary care.

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Health Care Systems in Transition: An International Perspective
Francis D Powell and Albert F Wessen (Editors)
Sage Publications
428pp
£24
ISBN: 0-7619-1082-4

Healthcare reform has been called the issue from hell. This book considers the way in which the UK, Sweden, Canada and Germany have tackled the problem of developing a financially viable healthcare system in the light of increasing demand.

The first of three sections outlines a suggested framework for a comparative study of healthcare reform.

The middle section contains the case studies of the four countries. Obviously, our main interest is in the frequently caustic analysis of the development and effects of the internal market in the UK.

Here, the authors conclude that the conservative reforms of the 1990s were expensive developments, based more on ideology than reality. They concede, however, that fundholding improved responsiveness to patient need. The final section tries to examine the future based on this comparative analysis.

Perhaps the omission of nursing is an indication of how little nursing has influenced the political and health agenda, not only in this country but elsewhere. Even so, I found the book's discussion about the recent development of the health service fascinating and enlightening.

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