

## From the Book Review Editor

**IN THIS ISSUE** of the Journal I am reviewing three texts with quite different themes, ranging from health law and ethics to statistics for health managers and, finally, how different health systems assess and control new technologies. Also in this edition is a watch on the wide range of reports that are released by various Government and non-government departments and agencies across Australia. Due to the huge number of reports released, it is not possible to review them all. However, AHR will attempt to highlight particular reports of interest and provide you with a web address. Happy reading!!

*Contemporary issues in healthcare law and ethics*  
Garwood-Gowers A, Tingle J, Wheat K (editors)  
Elsevier, 2005.  
ISBN: 0 7506 8832 7. RRP: \$83.50



**AS THE NAME IMPLIES**, this text takes a broad view on a range of contemporary health law and ethics issues. Each self-contained chapter adequately describes a particular ethical dilemma, provides a good commentary on the impact of the issue on today's health care system

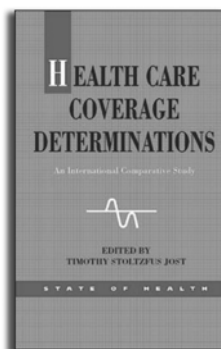
and makes suggestions as to possible policy changes. What is pleasing about this book is that it explores current law and ethical issues from a truly international perspective. There are examples from the United States, United Kingdom and Europe, as well as the Asia-Pacific region.

Another interesting aspect of this text is the exploration of a number of emerging issues. While most medicolegal and ethics texts deal with classic medicolegal issues surrounding reproductive technology and end-of-life issues, this book also explores concepts of medico-crime, the ownership of clinical risk in hospitals, the allocation of health care resources, approaches to medical negligence cases and the social creation of health care law.

This topical book is well set out and contains a number of useful case studies. The text would be of use equally in the classroom or by health care ethicists.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★

*Health care coverage determinations:  
an international comparative study*  
Jost TS (editor)  
Open University Press, 2005  
ISBN: 0 335214959. RRP: \$68.96



**THIS DESCRIPTIVE TEXT** examines the procedures, criteria and approaches across eight countries for assessing technologies for public health coverage. The text starts with a methodological overview and outlines issues surrounding new health care technologies and why technology is seen as the

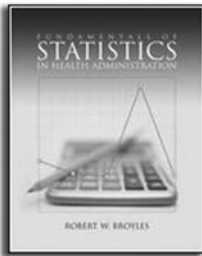
primary driver of health care cost growth. Each subsequent chapter provides a good introduction and systematically illustrates how each country approaches the potential blow-out in health care technology expenditure, highlighting the deficiencies in each of the approaches used. The health systems explored are extensive, including countries such as Australia, Canada, England, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United States. The final two chapters succeed in enlightening the reader about what can be learned from the different approaches to managing the introduction and funding of new health care technologies. A table summarising the key points of each system could have been used in the final chapters to further illustrate the similarities and differences of the technology assessment process.

This book makes good use of tables and figures in each chapter to explain the sometimes difficult

task of describing the processes used by countries to assess health technologies. Each chapter is meticulously researched and provides a number of pertinent case studies that assist the reader in understanding the various processes and procedures used worldwide. It would be an ideal reference for anyone interested in comparative health policy or health care delivery systems.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★

*Fundamentals of statistics in health administration*  
 Broyles RW  
 Jones and Bartlett, 2006  
 ISBN: 978 0 7637 4556 1. RRP: \$82.50



**THIS TEXT IS A USEFUL** addition to the desktop or library of health care managers who are required to analyse quantitative data using a range of statistical tests. Most of the statistical approaches and techniques that would be required by the contemporary health

care manager are outlined. The book commences with a discussion on the important role of statistics in health administration and the preparation of data then proceeds to cover basic statistical techniques such as distribution, probability and estimations of means. Following these basic approaches, it moves on to cover more advanced techniques such as analysis of variance, estimating seasonal variance, regression analysis, estimating trends and forecasting.

Each chapter contains exercises, and solutions to each of the exercises are included at the end. Illustrations and tables are well set out and adequately describe the theory. A useful glossary of terms is included. Probably the most pleasing aspect of the text is that it goes into detail on how to undertake the statistical techniques using Microsoft Excel, rather than specific statistical software that is not always available to the health care manager.

Reviewer rating: ★★★★★

## Report watch

There have been a number of reports released in the last few months that may be of some use to AHR readers. From now on, the Book Review section will provide a list of recently released reports and their relevant web address.

One report that has the potential to have a major impact on health care delivery in Australia has been the recent Productivity Commission on health care workforce reform. This report provides an in-depth and wide-ranging analysis of the issues and challenges facing health care provision and workforce in this country. The report covers areas such as key workforce trends and current issues, emerging workforce challenges and objectives for an efficient and effective health workforce. The report goes on to address institutional and regulatory frameworks affecting workforce deployment. The report provides a number of alternative approaches to health workforce education and training and also examines critical issues surrounding rural and remote workforce challenges. This is an important document that could well shape the future approach to workforce planning, education and implementation — a “must-read” document for all health managers, educators and policy analysts.

The Productivity Commission:

- Health Workforce Commissioned Study <<http://www.pc.gov.au/study/healthworkforce/index.html>>

### Other recent report releases

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:

- General Practice Activity in Australia 2004–2005 <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10189>>
- Australia's Welfare 2005 <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10186>>
- Improving the Quality of Indigenous Identification in Hospital Separations Data <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10222>>
- National Drug Strategy Household Survey — detailed findings <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10190>>

**Dr Gary E Day**

Book Review Editor

Lecturer in Health Services Management

School of Public Health

Queensland University of Technology