

Book review

THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, 4TH EDN

By S. Duckett and S. Willcox

Oxford University Press, 2011

ISBN: 9780195574647; xvii+387 pages

I am fortunate to be able to review the latest edition of a text I last reviewed in 2008 (*Aust Health Rev*, 2008; 32(2): 371). At that time I praised the text as 'providing useful insights and a deeper understanding of the issues that confront the future direction and delivery of health services in this country'. Some 3 years later, the fourth edition came across my desk.

On initial inspection, the text has undergone a significant facelift in regards to layout, style and approach. Also pleasing is the edition of useful summaries at the commencement of each chapter; key terms; with further reading lists and useful websites at the conclusion of each chapter. These enhancements take this edition to a new level. In addition to the chapters that focus on: frameworks for analysis; the Australian population and its health; financing healthcare; the Health workforce; departmental and intergovernmental structures; hospitals; public health; primary and community care; pharmaceuticals; and policy challenges for the Australian healthcare system, the authors have included three new focus areas, namely:

- Primary care services;
- Specialised health services; and
- Aged care and disability services.

Further enhancing this edition, the authors have included case studies to assist the reader to link theory and practical aspects. This inclusion is particularly useful for the student or casual observer of Australia's complex health system. The inclusion that I believe has strongly enhanced the fourth edition is the addition of a commentary by the authors at the end of each chapter that examines future reform directions. This approach nicely concludes each chapter, encouraging the reader to consider where Australia's system of healthcare may be heading in the future.

In 2008 I believed *The Australian Health Care System* was a 'useful addition to any library as well as a staple for students needing to more clearly understand the complexities and challenges of the Australian healthcare system'. At the time of the initial review I reviewed the text through the eyes of an academic. This time around I review the text from the perspective of a senior health executive. I can attest that this text is still as relevant today as it was in 2008. Additionally, with the fourth edition enhancements I have touched on in this review, this text is equally pertinent to the student, the academic and the practitioner. As was the case in 2008, this is a must-have text.

Dr Gary E. Day

Senior Associate Editor – Australian Health Review