

The Strategic Quality Manager: A Handbook for Navigating Quality Management Roles in Health and Aged Care

Cathy Balding

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Cathy Balding has been a powerful influence on how quality improvement and clinical governance has evolved in Australia for over 20 years. Cathy's work has contributed to the body of knowledge on many of the modules that make up our complex health care system. There is now a significant amount of literature on quality improvement, but very little on the role and skills of the quality manager. This book goes a long way towards filling this void.

Quality managers perform different functions in different organisations, based on organisational history, individual skill and service demands. This book helps to define what quality managers do and, importantly, what they do not or cannot do. Cathy devotes a chapter to defining the role and function of a quality manager, pointing out that quality managers do not 'do' quality, but rather their role is to facilitate the creation of quality in health care.

There is a strong focus throughout the book on practical strategies for working within an ever more elaborate health system. Each chapter looks at a particular component of quality improvement, including effecting change, quality leadership and strategic quality planning. The final chapter focuses on building the brand of a quality manager and explores a suggested way forward for quality managers including some reflective questions for current managers. In addition to Cathy's well-researched information, each chapter has a headline section that summarises

key messages as well as segments that include fundamental tips and examples. Some of these have intriguing headings, such as 'What happens when resilience goes missing', and there are numerous examples direct from Cathy's experience in which things could have been done differently. Each chapter has a comprehensive list of references and further reading. The book also includes a range of examples of relevant quality and governance tools.

Throughout the book the focus is on practical application of underlying principles of quality improvement, delivered with just the right amount of sage advice. Cathy's suggestion to remember that quality managers operate in a complex system and therefore should not expect that any path to improvement will be straight – rather more of a weave towards goals – will resonate with both new and experienced quality managers.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone already working in the quality field, regardless of their position title. It is a must-read for new quality managers or those feeling a little weary of the many challenges in this field. Much of the advice is also completely relevant to any health care leader who wants to positively influence the quality of their service.

Merrin Prictor

Echuca Regional Health

Echuca