

needs to be done in the best interest of the patient. In the chapter “Emergencies in Primary Care”, the importance of managing the transition from secondary to primary care is stressed, and the responsibility for this is firmly placed in the primary practitioner’s court.

There were only a couple of small points where I found fault. For instance, should “Personality Disorder” be listed as an “Acute Mental Health Primary Care Emergency”, and why were more “Communication Skills” not included? Also readers in search of a one-stop-shop for clinical advice could be disappointed, as specifics such as drug dosage and optimum length of treatment were beyond

the scope of this book. Although the book has a strong UK flavour, most of the content is pertinent and applicable to a New Zealand context.

This book is written for those of us who do not want to wade through pages of theory, evidence and waffle to find clinical information (“OK all very interesting but how can I actually help this patient?”) If you do like reading about ‘the bigger picture’, those sections are included, but I suspect that the “Clinical Issues” chapters will be the real draw-card to most practitioners. Here the evidence is summarised with a consistent primary care focus, in easy-to-find tables with practical points about assessment and management.

Buy one as a reference for your practice, and make sure your colleagues don’t take it home (the policy and conceptual parts are actually very interesting and readable too). Although we are accustomed to e-learning, there is still a place for an excellent reference book, and for primary care mental health, I think this is it. Very nice—practical, down-to-earth, well written and, in my view, long overdue.

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## The New Health Policy

Robin Gauld

Reviewed by **Associate Professor Jacqueline Cumming** BA, MA, Dip Health Econ, PhD; Director, Health Services Research Centre, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington

**T**he New Health Policy’ forms part of the excellent ‘State of Health’ series of books published by the Open University Press, focused on contributing to debates on the future of health services, summarising current research and thinking and analysing current and future key policy issues in health.

This book reviews key health policy issues and directions from the mid-1980s on, drawing on experiences particularly in Britain, New Zealand and the United States.

The book begins by setting out the context for recent health policy developments—including demographic changes and population ageing, increasing service demand and limited funding, the need for health systems to improve their performance, the increasing attention

being paid to service quality, and the new diseases and health risks that our populations face. Individual chapters then focus on key policy challenges in health sector funding and organisation; health care quality and safety; health care information and communications technology; governance, professionalism and public participation; public health, health determinants and disease control; and the private sector.

The book does an excellent job of describing the key tensions that arise in contemporary health policy, and discussing how different countries have gone about managing such tensions. The book discusses, in particular, two key philosophical positions underlying health policy—neoliberalism and social democracy—and how each viewpoint is influencing how countries reform their health systems. The book is seen by its

author as a start to a more in-depth discussion on how both of these philosophical positions jointly influence health policy and whether the combination is appropriate. This framework could have been more usefully reflected upon in the individual chapters, and the book could have considered in greater depth how the three countries learn from each other and adapt health policy to suit their individual health system histories and problems.

Students and primary care providers interested in knowing what might be coming next in terms of health policy will find this a highly readable and highly useful resource.

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