

An Introduction to Health Services Research

Dawn-Marie Walker (Ed.)
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Health service research has the potential to contribute to the identification of significant reforms for health services at a time when most governments are grappling with how to reign in health costs. Consequently, *An Introduction to Health Services Research* is a timely publication. This publication deals with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. However, it also takes the reader through the process of first understanding the importance of identifying the right question to research through budget formulation, proposal development and dissemination of findings. In addition, the book has specific chapters on specific health services research methods, including health economics, epidemiology and clinical trials. It also presents information on the use of the Internet as a research medium and the challenges associated with such research.

The authors have managed to convey the information in a highly accessible manner and the text is littered with well-constructed diagrams, tables and case studies. In addition, despite each chapter having been written by different groups of authors, there is cross-referencing between chapters that enables the reader to know that other information about a particular issue is presented elsewhere in the book.

This text is clearly targeting those who are new to health services research and require a comprehensive practical guide that details the process and methods in an easily digested style required for the successful undertaking of a health services

research project. It is also a suitable reference for those experienced health service researchers who want a guide covering a diverse range of methods that they may not necessarily have used in their own research endeavours, but are interested in understanding. It is suitable for those working in health services or those studying at universities (postgraduate and perhaps final year undergraduate students would benefit from this text).

Collectively, the 36 authors bring a vast range of expertise and experience to the book. A minor criticism of the group is that they are all based in the UK. Although it can be argued that the research methods presented can be applied anywhere, the inclusion of some examples that identified challenges that are not necessarily found in the UK would have been beneficial.

In the preface, Walker has written, 'This book will provide enough information for you to make an informed decision whether you would like to take your idea forward, and whether it is possible to do so'. The book achieves this and more, and thus represents a good investment for those with an interest in health services research.

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