This is still stuff, riding on the swell of the "new NHS". In the third section, however, David Morell conducts a scholarly and scathing dissection of the recent changes in GP contracts, leading directly to Denis Pereira Gray's well considered case for much increased academic support for general practice. David Hewitt, Tom O'Dowd and A D Wilson, and Richard Baker outline the enormous benefits which would arise from increased support—new and more relevant forms of medical education, medical care delivered to optimal (but flexible) standards, and a new tradition of accountability through medical audit.

Clive Richards ends the book by considering whether anyone will want to be a GP in this brave new world, reminding us that the health of the doctor is at least as important as that of his or her patients.

This collation is intentionally polemical: it will likely raise many hackles but it will also make us take stock of our hitherto sacred cows. For the reader, the book should be incorporated in the prescribed list for training practices, and those doctors who do not archive their BMJIs might do well to purchase it.

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Maxcy-Rosenau-Last Public Health and Preventive Medicine, 11th edition
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Health Services Research—Key to Health Policy

Health services research claims to be an authoritative account of the current state of the art and science of health care research in the USA. As such it is uniquely American in its orientation, context and style. The serious non-US reader will first have to contend with three pages of three to seven letter acronyms. AMA and DRG may be familiar enough this side of the Atlantic but try dealing with TEFRA (Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act) or RBRVS (Resource Based Relative Value Scale).

On a more serious note, of the 11 chapters in the book, I found chapter 7, by Professor Newhouse, the most interesting. It describes in detail the RAND Health Insurance Experiment, a remarkable and probably unique attempt to study in an experimental setting the effect of different methods of financing health care on service utilisation and health outcomes. The broad conclusions are almost unsurprising: services are less often used when people have to pay part of the cost of health care; this reduction in usage appears to be mainly confined to inappropriate use. The results relating to health outcomes are less conclusive. In any case the RAND experiment was conducted in such a special setting that the results can hardly be generalised. Another chapter on quality of care provides some fascinating information on the appropriateness of medical care and on the health outcomes of standard procedures in different hospitals. It also addresses the twin issues of the public's role in assessing quality of medical care and its ability to understand and use such information.

One of the book's strengths is its clear discussion of the ethical issues involved in the research. It is also a useful survey of the research literature on themes such as health care costs and funding, and health behavior research. The book is well written and accessible to readers with a background in health services research.

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The Future of Health Care

In October 1991 the BMA published a document entitled "Leading for health", in which it attempted to set the UK agenda for health in the 1990s. To answer some of the many questions raised, a series of articles was commissioned by the BMA. These have now been republished as The future of health care. Despite its short length, this book covers a broad range of issues, including rationing, accountability, management, audit, research, and health care funding. The articles are well suited to a general level of readership, and useful references are given for further reading.

Each contribution is from a respected figure in the mainstream of the health care debate. Given the space constraints, the authors make an excellent job of not only stating their own views and the basis for them, but also considering opposing arguments. There is a fair degree of overlap between the articles, particularly in respect of the issues of rationing and funding of health care, and it seems a pity that repudication was not taken as an opportunity for the authors to comment on several important differences of opinion which emerge. Insofar as the articles represent a response to "Leading for health", it is also disappointing that the focus should be so firmly upon health care delivery rather than health in its broader context. However, at least the reader has been served with fair warning of this in the title of the book! Overall, the BMA deserves credit for making available these eclectic and provocative pieces in a convenient and inexpensive format. For anyone interested in the future of the NHS, this book can be recommended as a useful starting point.

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Health Services Research in Denmark
(Pp 54; £US 38.) Copenhagen: P Bjerregaard, F Kamper-Jorgensen. The Danish Institute for Clinical Epidemiology. ISBN 87 89662 49 0.

This book describes almost 400 projects in health services research carried out in Denmark from 1989 to 1991. The projects are presented
The Future of Health Care

Cameron Edgell

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