Hospitals in a changing Europe


The stated objectives of this anthology are to provide a basis for more effective health policy making and its focus is on hospitals. It reviews the evidence both from eastern and western Europe and combines policy experience with academic research.

The 15 chapters contained in the anthology have been structured in four parts, each of them devoted to a general topic, namely; the context of hospitals, pressures upon hospitals, internal strategies for change, and conclusions. The first part of the book describes the hospitals different functions and trends in hospital activity throughout history. It also gives an overview of factors driving change in the hospital system. The second part pays attention to the interface between primary and secondary care and between hospital and post-hospital care. The research evidence on economics of scale is reviewed and prerequisites for high quality care identified. The evolving changes in hospital payment mechanisms in eastern Europe are described and analysis of the organisational structure of hospitals in transition economies are made.

The third part examines trends in employment in the hospital workforce and how management can encourage a culture that supports staff and patients. It also highlights some key drivers for change.

This book provides a useful guide for the policy maker. But also everyone else interested in healthcare systems and reforms will surely find this book very interesting and useful.

Agneta Kullen Engstrom
Hospital of Skaraborg, Skövde, Sweden

Statistics at square one, 10th edn


This book provides a nice overview of many basic statistical methods. It is clearly focused to be used by, for example, epidemiologists who need some statistical guidance. Topics that are discussed include: descriptive statistics, testing of hypotheses/construction of confidence intervals both for continuous as well as binary data, non-parametric statistics, linear regression, survival analysis.

There is a big change in this 10th edition, compared with the previous editions: because almost everyone has access to a computer nowadays, many details on the calculations for a pocket calculator have been removed. Instead, reference is made to easy software packages, even freeware if available. As a result of this, exact statements on p values are made, instead of, like in the previous editions, giving boundaries based on the distribution tables. Luckily these tables are still kept at the end of the book.

In each chapter, an interesting section on reading and reporting statistics in the medical literature has been added. Another nice expansion in this new edition is made in the section on binary data, where summary statistics like relative risk and odds ratio are included.

The book touches many subjects, and describes them very concisely. This is convenient if you want to look up a method and apply it. But if you want to know many details on a technique, you better look into one of the references. It is good that not only formulas and calculations are given, but that also some explanation is given on related issues like trial set up or sample size.

At the end of each chapter, there is a section called “common questions”. These are very pleasant to read, and they provide short answers to typical questions. The only drawback is that these answers are in many cases not reflected in the body of the chapter.

It is a short book, covering many statistical techniques. I have very much enjoyed reading it. The book is too concise if you want to study techniques in depth, but ideal to learn how to apply all the statistical theory that is covered.

Richard Morrow
Division of Health Systems, Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Baltimore, USA

Evidence-based public health


Within the recent outburst of “evidence-based” books covering now many medical specialties, this book is another welcome newcomer. Authors have chosen rightly for this first evidence-based public health (EBPH) book a methodological introduction, rather than the evidence-based coverage of particular problems in public health.

The message addresses a large readership with many recalls to basic notions from epidemiology, biostatistics, and other foundations of EBPH. This is wise, because many partners in public health are not health professionals. However, this coverage does not replace other ad hoc sources. “Boxes” in the text contain rather pinpoint practical examples than more complete case studies of public health programmes or research studies.

Nine chapters of this book follow various steps of health programme formulation—elaboration—implementation—evaluation. Many readers might be interested in the evidence-based coverage of specific public health problems in their entirety. Look elsewhere. Books on evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention are already on the market. Books on evidence-based health protection (environmental and occupational health, mental and social wellbeing, and others) will probably follow. As for disease prevention, only the US Guide to Preventive Services is quoted here. It narrows the international appeal of this writing. By the way, years of work of the Canadian Task Force...
Textbook of cancer epidemiology


Multi-authored books often look like an incongruous pastiche and taste like an indroitly cooked panaché de légumes. Not this one: the editors visibly put a lot of effort to achieve a uniform structure and style. Such effort was rewarded when its covers just bind a book; otherwise, the main purpose of such efforts is lost in a rather visually amorphous clutter that hardly mentions patients, doctors, nurses, or indeed any other healthcare workers. It is not easy to read from cover to cover but is rewarding.

Regulating entrepreneurial behaviour in European health care systems

Edited by R B Saltman, R Busse, E Mossialos. (Pp 240; £22.50 (pbk), £65.00 (hbk)). Open University Press, Buckingham, 2002. ISBN 0-335-20922-X (pbk); 0-335-20923-8 (hbk).

This is a hugely interesting book on health care systems in Europe. It is fascinating from a clinician’s point of view to read a book full of detail about health care that hardly mentions patients, doctors, nurses, or indeed any other healthcare workers. It is not easy to read from cover to cover but is rewarding.

Society for Social Medicine

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Contact details: SSM Conference Administrator, Scottish School of Primary Care, NHS Education for Scotland, The Lister, 11 Hill Square, Edinburgh EH8 9DR, UK. Tel: +44 (0) 131 651 4061; fax: +44 (0) 131 651 4010; email: heather.coupar@nes.scot.nhs.uk; web site: http://www.socsocmed.org.uk/