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**Information Management
Research Institute**

He@lth Information on the Internet

Editorial – ‘Producing Patient Information’

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This editorial covers a book Producing Patient Information: how to research, develop and produce effective information resources that complements the book The Resourceful Patient <<http://www.resourcefulpatient.org/>> discussed in the editorial in Issue 33

Practical guidance on producing consumer health information

The Resourceful Patient was a book of ideas: *Producing Patient Information* is a practical ‘how-to-do’ resource. *The Resourceful Patient* was available in both electronic and paper formats: *Producing Patient Information* is, unfortunately, only available as a printed book although it contains many references to Web-based resources.

Producing Patient Information is published by the King’s Fund, and is the updated edition of the *POPPI Guide, 2000*. Its sections cover:

- Why provide information?
- Before getting started
- Planning an information package
- Collecting the evidence
- Content and presentation
- Choosing the medium
- Attaining quality
- Dissemination
- Evaluating and updating

- Listings: Useful contacts, Sources for project funding, Useful Web sites, Bibliography

Each section is produced to a standard format, with an overview, key action points, case studies (so the reader can learn from other people’s experiences), information points, useful Web sites and further reading. Each of these elements is marked by its own distinctive icon (though it would have been nice to have a key to the icons at the beginning of the book).

The book is comprehensive (though there are a few omissions;

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for example, Patient UK <<http://www.patient.co.uk>> is not listed in the useful Web sites) and takes the reader through every stage in producing consumer health information. It can either be read through from beginning to end as a learning tool or dipped into as a reference source.

I particularly liked the first section 'Why provide information?' which covers key policies – very important when justifying a bid for funding to develop consumer health information material. However, the next two sections are also important as they emphasise the need to reflect and plan – particularly necessary as there is much duplication of effort and lack of co-ordination in the field of consumer health information. Section 2 'Before getting started' suggests pausing, not jumping straight in, and considering how producing consumer health information fits in with the organisation's overall information policy. Section 3 'Planning an information package' advises looking for and building upon information that already exists. Two major concerns in the healthcare field – evidence and quality – are covered in section 4 'Collecting the evidence' and section 7 'Attaining quality'. Section 5 'Content and presentation' concentrates on

writing style and readability. Section 6 'Choosing the medium' is another important section, covering how to reach minority groups and people with disabilities. Section 8 'Dissemination' and section 9 'Evaluating and updating' rounds off the book with aspects of

... recommended reading for anyone producing their own consumer health information and for healthcare students, as information giving is a vital part of their future healthcare practice.

sustainability that are often forgotten in the satisfaction of producing your material. In fact, section 3 on planning suggests building in ideas on dissemination at these early stages, not leaving it to the end. The same should go for **planning, piloting and evaluation**.

The author has followed his own advice and produced a simply written, well-structured book. It should be recommended reading for anyone producing their own consumer health information and for healthcare students, as information giving is a vital part of their future healthcare practice.

I have a few small criticisms. The style of subheadings in each section is not distinctive enough and you can become a bit muddled as to where you are. Would numbering

help? A complete listing at the back of the book of all the Web sites and references cited would also have been very useful, supporting use of the book as a reference source. The bibliography and the useful Web sites given in the 'Listings' section are not the same as those given in

each section (though there is a small amount of overlap).

However, my main concern is that this very useful resource is not available free on the Web. Not only would this be particularly helpful for raising the quality of consumer health information, it would also make it easier for the author to keep it up-to-date. I appreciate that the King's Fund, an independent charitable foundation, has to meet its costs and raise funds.

Could some way of funding Web access to this resource be found?

REFERENCE

Duman M. (2003) *Producing patient information: How to research, develop and produce effective information resources*. London, King's Fund. 140pp. ISBN: 1 85717 47-0 4. Price £20.00 <<http://www.kingsfundbookshop.org.uk>>

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eHealth awards

The eEurope Awards

<<http://www.e-europeawards.org>> are four competitions, taking place between 2003 and 2005, for the best of 'existing ICT applications used in public life and/or public service provision'. The results of the first competition, eHealth Awards, were presented at the **eHealth 2003: ICT for Health Conference, May 2003, Brussels**.

The NHS Direct Online Web site was one of four winners out of 180 applications.