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## BOOK REVIEWS

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Jack E. Fincham and Albert I. Wertheimer, eds., *Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System*. Second edition. Binghamton, NY: The Pharmaceutical Products Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 1998, 557 pp. \$69.95 (hardcover), \$39.95 (softcover).

The second edition of *Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System* is a welcome update to a useful first edition. It continues to provide an overview of how pharmacy interfaces with the contemporary United States health-care system, and does so in the context of the changing health-care environment. Interactions and relationships among patients, pharmacists, physicians, governmental regulators, and insurers have become increasingly complex. Based on the book, such a complex web of relationships has evolved within an environment characterized by changes in politics, managed care, economics, mergers, and an aging population.

The editors have compiled 18 chapters written by a very impressive group of expert authors. It is the opinion of this reviewer that, with some modifications, *Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System* could become a standard textbook for instructors of pharmaceutical distribution and health-care systems courses at colleges of pharmacy in the United States. We required our students in an introductory pharmacy management course to purchase the book as a required text and found it to be useful. However, we did find that the second edition is not quite to the point where it can stand alone as a text upon which a whole course can be designed for some reasons outlined next.

First, the 18 chapters are presented in a logical sequence but there are no section headings to help students categorize the chapters into meaningful groups. Three or four sections with an introduction to each section explaining the purpose of each chapter would be useful to students and instructors using the book for a course. As it is now, the book lacks structure for guiding the reader through the diverse chapters.

Second, the book could be expanded to include chapters related to payment for prescription drugs, advertising and promotion of pharmaceuticals, and in-depth public policy discussions. A review of syllabi from introductory pharmacy management courses might uncover other chapters or sections that should be included.

Third, case studies relevant to each chapter would be useful for adoption as a teaching text. Such case studies could be placed on World Wide Web pages or CD-ROMs and listed at the end of the book for the users of the text. With increased use of computer technology spawned by the advent of non-traditional Pharm.D. programs, a number of case studies could be shared over web or CD-ROM. Such an addition to the book would increase its value to instructors and students and might place this useful book as a standard text in colleges of pharmacy.

In addition to being a valuable text for instructors and students, *Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System* is a valuable tool for researchers for a number of reasons. First, it is well referenced and indexed. The authors of each chapter base their arguments on published sources. The index is comprehensive and contains keywords that are sufficiently specific to be of great value to the reader.

Another strength is that most contributors use a perspective of pharmacists and pharmacy practice within the overall health-care system. Such a perspective reveals emerging trends and pharmacist roles as they relate to changes occurring in the health-care system overall. Too often, pharmacy practice is viewed and discussed in isolation from other important environmental, economic, and political influences occurring in health care or society overall.

Finally, this book serves as an easy to use reference for researchers interested in trends and estimates of pharmacy specific statistics. Statistics as diverse as estimated persons employed in health occupations to trends in long-term care facility beds are included in this book. Some statistics could be outdated by the time the reader uses the book, but sources of information used for the statistics often are included so that the reader can find the most current information from a primary source.

In summary, *Pharmacy and the U.S. Health Care System* is a collection of chapters written by experts in their chosen fields. The editors of this book have compiled the chapters in a logical order for most readers. The popularity and quality of this book should justify a third edition in which more improvements can be made to an already useful text. With some changes, this book could become a standard text used at United States colleges of pharmacy.

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Robert L. McCarthy, *Introduction to Health Care Delivery: A Primer for Pharmacists*. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers, Inc., 1998. xviii + 430 pp. \$65.00 (softcover).

*Introduction to Health Care Delivery: A Primer for Pharmacists* provides a comprehensive overview of the American health-care delivery system. The sections of the book take the reader through: 1. American health-care history and politics, 2. health-care delivery systems, 3. American health-care financing, 4. comparative health-care systems, 5. reforming the U.S. health-care system, and 6. American pharmacy in the 21st century. What differentiates this book from others which have discussed this subject is the unique and refreshing perspectives the contributors bring to their topics by “simultaneously weaving in discussion about the role, activities, and impact of pharmacists” (p. xvii).

Educators in pharmacy and other health-care disciplines may find this book to be valuable for an introductory course on the health-care delivery system. Readers who may benefit from the material include undergraduate pharmacy students and practitioners. The information is presented in a straightforward, easy-to-understand, and thorough manner. Researchers and graduate students in this area may find the book to be a useful resource for its historical perspectives and presentation of health-care trends, as well as a stimulus for future research.

The book has several strengths worth mentioning. The layout of the book and presentation of chapter material is straightforward and well-organized. In general, each chapter is structured by beginning with an historical perspective of the chapter topic, which provides a foundation and starting point for understanding the chapter material. Pharmacists' roles and opportunities for pharmacists are discussed in relation to each topic. This is critical information for readers, as the pharmacy profession is constantly challenged to demonstrate its value and is evolving to determine its niche in the health-care system. The book provides definitions of terms commonly used in the health-care delivery system, which may be useful for educators in this area, as well as students. In addition, the book presents timely information about past and current health-care trends.

Another strength is that each chapter begins with chapter questions and ends with questions for further discussion. This is a useful feature for educators as a method of focusing their teaching efforts and fostering class discussion. Students may find this feature beneficial for providing an overview of important areas of the chapter, as well as serving as a study aid. Questions for further discussion are also structured with the pharmacy practitioner in mind. Practitioners are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and apply ideas brought up in the chapter to their own practice settings.

The book is well referenced and could be a valuable resource for readers

who are interested in pursuing the topics further. The index is thorough and will be beneficial to readers in searching for topics of interest.

The 21 contributors to the book are from diverse backgrounds including pharmacy, psychology, sociology, and political science. The contributors to these 19 chapters share their expertise and perspectives concerning the many facets of the health-care delivery system. Included in the book is a compilation of information about how to contact the contributors. This information will be useful for readers who desire more information concerning the topics in the book.

*Introduction to Health Care Delivery: A Primer for Pharmacists* is an excellent introductory book. It allows readers to gain a greater understanding of the American health-care delivery system and the roles and opportunities for pharmacists within this evolving system.

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