

Book Review: ABC of Health Informatics

**Frank Sullivan and Jeremy C Wyatt. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
ISBN: 0727918508. <http://www.blackwellmedicine.com>**

At 46 pages (and that includes the index and glossary!), the aim of this slim volume is to provide an introduction to health informatics to clinicians and students. Focused on how information technology can help clinicians in treating patients, *The ABC of Health Informatics* provides accessible, user-friendly information in a simple format.

The book follows a logical structure. The first chapter explores the nature of information with a very helpful checklist on what type of clinical information should be kept and how to use it. The second chapter then goes on to explore the electronic medical information now directly available to patients, for example through patient portals. Subsequent chapters chart the use of information by clinicians during consultation, through the management of clinical problems and during referral and follow-up. An excellent section on decision-support tools provides a quick overview of screening tools and clinical practice guidelines.

Concluding chapters look at learning in the workplace, using information to improve service delivery and the future of e-health. Services that help clinicians answer clinical questions at the workplace are mentioned such as the ATTRACT service and Clinical Evidence. Secondary use of data is outlined and highlights the need to present data in a meaningful way, so that it can contribute to the improvement of healthcare services.

Each chapter is short and illustrated with graphics and tables, making it an ideal book to dip into for 'bite-size information'. Patient case studies are drawn on to illustrate how clinical information is used, and to highlight ways in which information use can improve patient care and experience. References are given at the end of each chapter enabling the reader to continue learning about a topic if desired. A glossary of health informatics terms is also provided at the end of the book.

This is an ideal book to read if you are interested in gaining an introduction to how information technology can be used by the clinician to improve patient care. However, further reading will be needed if you want to acquire an in-depth knowledge of health informatics. I found this to be a very useful overview of the use of clinical information, which I would recommend to every healthcare library.

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