

# Book Reviews

## Health Care Reform as Social Change

Richard E. Thompson, MD

*American College of Physician Executives, Tampa, FL, 1993, 179 pp., \$29 (member), \$34 (nonmembers), (paperback)*

HEALTHCARE REFORM—A SERIOUS TOPIC for sure—is not always taken so seriously in this upbeat, enthusiastic book. Cartoons and sidebars from the author and other sources made the material humorous and held my attention. Given all that has been said in learned texts and in the media, one might question if anything worthwhile could be added. But this aggregation of facts, opinions, anecdotes, and recommendations for physician executives is useful. The book's subtitle, "Why Successful Physicians and Health Care Executives are Retooling

the Health Care Industry" should help potential readers decide whether to add this work to their library.

The first chapter is a compendium of conventional wisdom regarding the "Symptoms of a Seriously Sick System." The author follows with a 20-year review of the health-regulation creep that occurred between 1974 and 1993. He implies that the competition which pitted hospital and physician providers against each other, whether through certificates of need or diagnosis-related groups, started the healthcare system on the negative slope that, in part, has caused today's dilemmas.

Having described the ills of the healthcare system, Richard E. Thompson, MD, reviews proposed cures, asking whether the experience of other nations and their healthcare systems are applicable to the situation in the United States. This is a useful exercise for those of us who have not studied how other

Western-style cultures provide and pay for health services.

The author next gets more personal, stating his opinions about the driver of federal health policy—the political system. He describes government leaders as "position takers given seats at the table before problem solvers." What follows next is a criticism of the pumped-up public expectations (fostered by marketers and government hype) and the effect of these unrealistic expectations on our health system's problems.

Chapter 6 is about how the values of people in business create a money-flow versus a money-drain economy. This chapter caught my attention because it is unique. However, I found it too cryptic and brief. The chapter "Lack of Leadership" was textbookish. Physicians, many of whom enjoy positions of short-term medical staff authority, might find the chapter useful but not always relevant to a health system.

## BOOK BRIEFS

### Reengineering Health Care: A Vision for the Future

*David Zimmerman and John J. Skalko, Eagle Press, Franklin, WI, 1994, 267 pp.*

Although healthcare's future is unclear, the industry shows signs of healing itself without government intervention. Reengineering is one of the keys to survival. The authors have found that reengineering is often confused with downsizing or patient-focused care. In addition, David Zimmerman and John J. Skalko question whether the best approach to reengineering a healthcare facility is to allow consultants to do it. Finally, they acknowledge that most employees do not welcome reengineering. This means many providers must overcome serious obstacles when attempting to improve operations.

### Promise & Performance in Managed Care: The Prepaid Group Practice Model

*Donald K. Freeborn and Clyde R. Pope, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994, 170 pp., \$40*

Quantitative information on the performance of health maintenance organizations or similar types of managed care plans has been scarce until now. Donald K. Freeborn and Clyde R. Pope examine the effects of managed care on members, assessing satisfaction with care, and on physicians, evaluating their managed care experiences. The authors present a brief history of managed care in the United States and move on to discuss what determines the choice of a health plan, access to care, patient and physician satisfaction, and the implica-

tions of these findings for the future of managed care.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

**Chaplains to the Imprisoned: Sharing Life with the Incarcerated**, Rev. Richard Denis Shaw, Haworth Press, Binghamton, NY, 1995

**Eating Disorders: New Directions in Treatment and Recovery**, Barbara P. Kinoy, ed., Columbia University Press, New York City, 1994

**Expressions of the Catholic Faith: A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church**, Kevin Orlin Johnson, Ballantine Books, New York City, 1994



What follows next is a diatribe about the use of third parties in problem resolution and planning—lawyers and consultants. Acid in tone, this chapter missed the mark in my opinion. It is up to boards of directors and health executives to control the use and role of surrogates; it is too much to ask fee-for-service planning consultants and lawyers to control themselves. After a criticism of the costs of consultants, the author discusses cost drivers such as executive compensation and drug detailing. Thompson then introduces a new spin on iatrogenic complications—disappointed physicians. I found that this perspective helps administrators better understand physicians' frustrations.

I did not find the comments on the characteristics of the sought-after physician future oriented. Although Thompson described many avenues for provider collaboration, he did not expect short-term results from these opportunities. I advocate that including a spirit of collaboration among the characteristics of the sought-after physician from this point forward could produce better results.

The author wraps up his contribution with useful but less-developed comments on the effect of total quality management and continuous quality improvement, medical education, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, workers' compensation, and some other facets of healthcare—all of importance to the physician executive.

*Health Care Reform as Social Change* is replete with references and questions at the end of each chapter. These help the reader delve deep into healthcare reform issues. Unfortunately, the binding does not allow for frequent use.

This sincere work is generally well thought out and an excellent text for new physician executives.

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## Holy Spirit's "HealthWorkS" project offers health screenings at a local mall.

and partially funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Masonic Foundation, provides a comprehensive array of prenatal, after-care, child development, intervention, and treatment services to substance-abusing women and their children. The program works to build the mother's self-esteem and to ensure the prenatal care vital to a child's health and well-being. The program also teaches effective parenting skills, provides prenatal and postpartum support groups, and assists with baby-sitting and transportation needs.

### HEALTH INFORMATION LIBRARY

To help build a healthy, knowledgeable community, the Holy Spirit Hospital Referral Center's computerized Health Information Library offers more than 850 health and medical topics. Callers who want information on a certain problem can request a computerized printout on the condition and, if they wish, a referral to a physician.

### AT THE MALL


The entire community can take advantage of a new service that opened last fall at a local shopping mall. Holy Spirit's "HealthWorkS" information center, a joint service project of the hospital and the mall, offers health screenings, health education and information, nutrition counseling, a video library with semiprivate viewing areas, a

health-risk appraisal computer program, access to the hospital's referral center and medical library through telephone and fax, seminars, demonstrations, comprehensive information, and educational displays from organizations such as the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Arthritis Foundation, and American Red Cross. During its first three months of operation, "HealthWorkS" had 5,027 contacts.

### ADDITIONAL OUTREACH

Outreach is not a new concept for Holy Spirit. Ciccioppo notes that in the late 1970s the first two Holy Spirit Family Health Centers opened in response to community leaders' concerns about the need for accessible, affordable healthcare in their communities. There are now family health centers in three other communities.

Holy Spirit also sponsors a number of other outreach efforts, according to Reisinger. These include monthly health screenings, provided free or at a nominal cost; publication of health education materials, such as the monthly *HealthSmart* insert in the Harrisburg, PA, *Patriot News*; free health promotion lectures; and the coordination of numerous health fairs. □

 For additional information on Holy Spirit Hospital's outreach efforts, call Tamara Reisinger, 717-763-2777.