

## Review

# Going paperless, a guide to computerisation of primary care

*Nicola Shaw,  
Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press Ltd, 2001,  
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The first part of the book is meant as a guide for GPs who want to buy a primary care clinical system. The second part explains how such a system can be used effectively.

The book is written by a trained and experienced medical informatician and not by a computer literate GP who could have presented the material based on his personal (perhaps biased) experience. As stated in the foreword, the book, therefore, provides a dispassionate and scientific analysis of the issues and problems facing those who need to develop a paperless practice.

The book mixes a 'fairy story' about the members of a primary care team as they replace their clinical system and start to use it effectively with a more objective description of the subject. This mixing of stories makes the book enjoyable to read and offers the reader time to digest the objective content. In addition, a large number of appendices support in a more detailed way what is presented in the various chapters.

The first chapter introduces the subject and the second chapter continues with the introduction of a number of problems that have to be solved before deciding on a system. Problems as terminology differences and ownership questions are alluded to. It is a pity that the situation in Britain is discussed and that this situation

is not presented in a separate chapter, so that readers from other countries are better able to comprehend that situation and its accompanying benefits and limitations.

In further chapters, the requirements specification, demonstrations of products, the decision of which system to buy and the implementation of the system are discussed. Again emphasis is on systems available in Britain. The last chapter of part 1 discusses possible future problems regarding training, maintenance and the consequences of changes in the national policy.

The second part of the book starts with going paperless and what rules you have to consider before going paperless. The book then continues with a discussion of where the information of a practice comes from, what is done with it and where it goes to. Once you know this you can decide who will record which data when the information system and formulate guidelines for data recording. The next chapters discuss data quality, data reporting and problems associated with being paperless.

The book can be recommended to GPs from Britain. It is easy to read and still gives a lot of background. The book can also be recommended to GPs from outside Britain. These GPs have to take into account however, that the British situation is taken as a reference.

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