

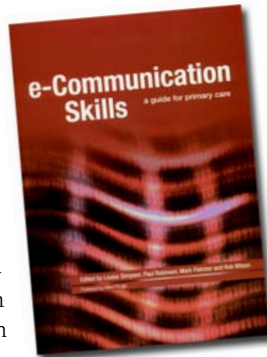
Communicating electronically

e-Communication skills. A guide for primary care.

Louise Simpson, Paul Robinson, Mark Fletcher, Rob Wilson, editors. Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing, 2005 (x + 132 pp, \$59.60). ISBN 1 85775 868 4.

THIS SHORT GUIDE to the world of “e-communication” for United Kingdom general practitioners is a departure from the plethora of books on health informatics for primary care services, which tend to focus on detailed descriptions or evaluations of information systems and management. This book attempts something quite different and novel — to provide guidance to health practitioners on how they should use the information tools at their disposal to access information and communicate with patients and other providers.

The editors are from the north-east of England and are known for their contribution to health informatics in British general practice. Their book is designed for a UK audience, but is mostly still of relevance in Australia (although it does not deal with some important tools for e-communication in Australian general practice, such as registers and care plans).



e-Communication skills comprises a series of brief chapters which can be read in 15 to 20 minutes each, providing clear take-home messages that are understandable to any clinician. The second chapter notes three key issues identified in a Scottish report on patients' views: enabling shared decision making, patient and clinician access to evidence-based guidance, and interdisciplinary teamwork. However, the book does not follow this thematic structure. Thus, while many chapters contain very useful ideas or suggestions (such as how to prevent use of the computer from disrupting rapport in the consultation and how to send and receive better emails), it is difficult to identify the key messages from the book as a whole.

This is an accessible book which will be of interest to all those involved in facilitating information management and communication within general practice. Despite some limitations, it is worth the read.

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