

Books and media

Teaching Made Easy: a manual for health professionals

Ruth Chambers, David Wall
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The days when the medical specialist was automatically considered as an expert in teaching medicine are thankfully over. It is now almost universally accepted that knowledge of educational concepts and training in teaching methods are essential to be an effective teacher. *Teaching Made Easy: a manual for health professionals* is a welcome addition to the expanding collection of books aimed at teachers of health professions students. The authors are experienced GPs who have decided to delve into the realm of the educationists, and presented in simple terms valuable advice that would prove useful to the novice as well as to the teacher who counts many years of service in the learning setting.

The book is written considering the issues relevant to the NHS of UK. However, this should not put off the non-UK resident as the concepts and techniques discussed would be readily applicable in other situations.

The authors use the well-established educational cycle of aims and objectives, teaching methods, and assessment (known to some as the 'Chicago Cycle') in developing the themes. A preparatory step, that of assessing of educational needs, has been added highlighting its close link with educational objectives. Following a review of the educational concepts, a detailed analysis is provided regarding the different teaching methods. The widely used learning settings are dealt with, and valuable practical hints on the organization of meetings and workshops are offered. It is also refreshing to note that the educational cycle keeps surfacing on many different occasions, which helps to emphasize the fact that it constitutes the very basis of planning and organizing educational events.

A substantial proportion of the book is devoted to dealing with teaching, assessment, appraisal and evaluation of the trainee at postgraduate level. Trainers and program directors should find this section very useful in identifying approaches that they may use, instead of having to extrapolate from suggestions that have been offered for improving undergraduate teaching.

A collection of pithy cartoons make the book interesting, while informing the reader that the cautious and appropriate use of humor could make his own teaching sessions less boring, and enhance the attention of the learner. The authors have taken a commendable stand as regards 'teaching by humiliation'. Many of us could recall an occasional teacher who seemed to relish the opportunity of humiliating the hapless learner, and it is worth asking ourselves whether any teaching could occur under such conditions. The quotes from the junior doctors and the apt illustration help to convey the message forcefully. The different models of feedback complement the discussion, and teachers who often have to give feedback to learners without ever having been exposed to how it should be done, would find the section an effective resource.

A feature that I found helpful, and a departure from many other texts, is "What can go wrong?", and what may be done to avoid the problems. This format is used throughout the book with respect to many teaching methods and organization of learning activities.

I wonder whether the diagrams on development of education and training could have been simplified, and the use of bullets reviewed. In spite of this comment, the book could be recommended as useful reading not only for the clinician who does some teaching, but also for the full-time academic who has not received any formal training in educational technology.

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