

Book review: If you want good personal healthcare - see a vet, by David Zigmond

Published last year this book has been enthusiastically received by many healthworkers e.g.

“Dr David Zigmond beautifully explains what’s wrong with general practice”
This book is a *cri de coeur* from the very soul of general practice. That feeling you’ve had about why it all feels so wrong – the answer is here. Industrialised, standardised healthcare with guidelines, protocols and tick boxes has removed the immeasurable but invaluable from general practice. Zigmond (a GP and psychotherapist in Bermondsey) asserts that: ‘the underlying reservoir of alienation, resentment, mistrust and anomie [amongst doctors] remains largely unarticulated, and little understood.’ **Pulse magazine**

This work has been so well received that the author won the 2016 UK Leadership Awards Title in the Positive Deviant category (an inspiration to us all??).

Stuffed full of aphorisms and overflowing with insights, he makes a central point very effectively: that (good) healthcare is a humanity guided by science. The challenging title comes from his observations that healthcare is being industrialised and that “in our urge to treat we do not pause to heal”

In one chapter he describes watching a vet at work. This vet still works more in the traditional manner of the caring professions – taking the time to observe the patient and their nuances of attitude and behaviour before diving in with a package of treatment. Other chapters’ headings are more direct e.g. “Institutional atrocities” and “Renationalisation of the Rail Services?, Why not, instead, start with the NHS?”

The book is a collection of David’s writings over 40 years. He has been a veteran contributor to the *Journal of Holistic Healthcare*, and many of the introductory 13 chapters explain the principles of holism as well as introductions to schools of thought in psychiatry and sociology. He demonstrates their use, as well as the limitations of our orthodoxy in the real world of clinical practice.

There follows many articles exploring themes or examining common problems in mental healthcare and general practice and showing how the fragmentation of health services so often works against the patients’ best interests; hitting those in greatest need the hardest.

Whilst hard-hitting in its criticisms, it is written with warmth, understanding and humour, it is imbued with the spirit of philanthropy to remind us there is a better way to run our service.

Very highly recommended both as a resource of well documented examples of our current problems and an affirmation of the sound principles we need to restore.

If You Want Good Personal Healthcare – See a Vet. Industrialised Humanity: Why and how should we care for one another. David Zigmond (2015). New Gnosis Publications