References


Two books published in 1993 provide reference assistance for medical librarians and health care professionals. Alan Rees's Encyclopedia of Health Information Sources (EHIS), now in its second edition, lists sources that can be utilized to find information on more than 350 health-related topics. The Healthcare Resource and Reference Guide (Guide) originates from questions raised and answers provided at the American Medical Association's (AMA) reference and referral center. While EHIS points the reader to a variety of other sources for information, the Guide attempts to provide sufficient information to answer many of the questions raised by those health care professionals "without convenient access to a hospital library" (preface).

EHIS is essentially a tool for locating as many as fifteen different types of health information sources. Pointing to the need for a resource like EHIS, Rees observes, "As the information supermarket grows in size and complexity, the need becomes more urgent for an integrated shopping list" (p. ix). Because of its integration, EHIS is a useful collection development tool. In addition, its inclusion of professional associations and other organizations relevant to each topic make EHIS a valuable tool for reference and referral services.

The organization of EHIS is alphabetical by health topic. A number of cross-references appear in the body of the book to assist the user. The "Outline of Contents" at the beginning of the work presents all topics covered, as well as the cross-references that have been made. Entries in EHIS have been arranged alphabetically by topic, then by source type, and, finally, by title or name of the organization. Covering more than 350 health topics, EHIS refers to 6,715 different sources of information.

The inclusion of fax as well as telephone numbers and the coverage of available CD-ROM databases are new and welcome features of the second edition of EHIS. The commitment to the coverage of electronic information resources is clear because EHIS is itself available from Gale in both print and electronic formats. Rees's dedication to consumer health information is evident in his inclusion of several hundred popular works and newsletters. EHIS does not provide annotations for its entries. This absence of annotations is understandable, however, given the tremendous number of sources included. Those seeking more evaluative guides to health information sources may find Information Sources in the Medical Sciences [1] or Introduction to Reference Sources in the Health Sciences [2] to be useful. Unique to EHIS, however, is its coverage of relevant associations and organizations.

Future editions of EHIS will need to include information sources accessible through the Internet. Relevant listservs, electronic bulletin boards, and electronic mail ad-

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addresses are sorely missed in the current edition. Nevertheless, EHIS will be a valuable addition to libraries, both as a collection development and reference and referral resource. Unfortunately, the value of EHIS is clearly reflected by its price.

In contrast to EHIS, the Healthcare Resource and Reference Guide aims at providing sufficient information to answer many of the questions about a topic, in addition to listing relevant information sources. Drawn from the questions frequently asked at the AMA’s reference and referral center, the topics covered and information provided in the Guide are aimed primarily at physicians. Indications of this are entries on “Locating a Medical Assistant” (p. 149-50), “What Happens When a [Malpractice] Suit Is Filed” (p. 223-4), and “Selling a Medical Practice” (p. 259-60). In its entries, the Guide draws overwhelmingly from AMA publications.

A strength of the Guide is its coverage of state organizations, such as the statewide cancer societies, AIDS/HIV hotlines, and state licensing offices. Another strength is its reprinting of relevant articles from JAMA. Obituaries from JAMA of the Mayo brothers (p. 146-8) serve as valuable entries in the Guide. Less appropriate for a reference book was the editors’ decision to reprint five poems.

The Guide’s shortcomings are notable. Its overwhelming reliance on JAMA and other AMA publications is a significant limitation. As source material for all entries, the Guide draws on sixty AMA publications. Five government documents are the only non-AMA publications utilized. The Guide’s AMA bias becomes even clearer at the end of the book, where fifty-eight pages are devoted to the history, organization, and administration of the AMA.

A shortcoming of the Guide is its organization. Arranged alphabetically, titles of entries are often questionable. Information about malpractice suits, for example, is found under “Professional Liability.” No cross-references are present in the body of the work, forcing the reader to rely heavily on the Guide’s index. Finally, the number of typographical errors is a disturbing feature of the Guide.

Both EHIS and the Guide attempt to provide health-related reference assistance. Covering more than fifteen types of information sources for more than 350 topics, Rees’s Encyclopedia of Health Information Sources succeeds admirably. Relying almost exclusively on articles from one journal and in-house publications from a single organization, Healthcare Resource and Reference Guide does not.

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References


Self-empowerment, one of the buzzwords of the nineties, includes the vital area of personal health. Americans are increasingly bombarded by the press and television with the promotion of health, the prevention of disease, new medical breakthroughs, and the issues of national health insurance. In order to make informed and intelligent decisions, the public needs to have medical material written in plain English that they can understand.

Personal Health Reporter (PHR) arrives in this health-conscious climate with a large 8½-by-11-inch book of 627 pages of medical information couched in everyday language.

Rees and Willey, through computer searches of MEDLINE and other medical, health, nursing, and nutrition databases, have selected excerpts on 148 medical conditions and treatments and other health issues (p. iii). Professional medical, nursing, and health journals and other sources have supplied the material, which ranges from roughly 1985 to 1991, with the majority from 1989 to 1991.

PHR is suitable for audiences of both lay readers and health professionals. With the public increasingly requesting medical information from public, medical, health, and hospital libraries, this book would be invaluable in meeting these demands.

PHR covers a variety of medical interests and includes some associated areas that would allow easy retrieval by librarians, such as nursing homes, choosing a physician, health insurance, quackery, medical malpractice, and others.

The 148 topics are listed alphabetically in the table of contents and throughout the book from acne to yeast infections (vaginitis), with a twenty-nine-page index at the end. The preface lists the fourteen broad topics from alternative medicine to substance abuse and the sources used from professional medical journals to government publications.

Each topic is two to four pages long and divided into pertinent headings. Based on the page size (8½ by 11 inches), the topic coverage is considerable. Topics start with definition (if appropriate), then overview, and end with re-