

than ever to make it easier for people to move towards a healthier weight.<sup>9</sup>

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## Book review

### In Stitches: The highs and lows of life as an A&E doctor

By Dr Nick Edwards. Friday Project Limited; 2007

Review by Emma K Hodgson, Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Lancaster Medical Practice

In stitches is an exploration of Dr Nick Edward's A&E work during his time as a registrar, highlighting the emotional, personal, professional and political impacts encountered. Many of the emotions and situations encountered are relatable for many of us, either in our current roles, or roles undertaken during training. The book was born through his compassion for the NHS alongside the frustrations encountered, coped with through the expression of what he sees with humour. Compassion and support for the NHS is shared by many of us and has been seen by the rainbows from the public in the Covid-19 pandemic. These themes of compassion and politics are debated throughout the book, leading to the question, are these shared dilemmas others encounter? The likely answer is yes, as we have seen other medics produce books about their experiences with a desire to share a realistic viewpoint.

Honesty is often presented with sensitivity by Edwards, describing situations where patients would be better suited to being treated in another setting, whilst understanding that this is not the fault of the patient, but acknowledging wider system flaws and communication within management and/or politics. However, this does provide a transparency that is open to all to access. This could lead to the question, is this the right forum? Could the impact of politics and policy be better communicated? Yet, the realism and empathy of Edwards is evident through the collection of experiences. Rather than traditional chapters of a book, Edwards uses a delightful and extensive range of short scenarios with

headings that give a flavour of what is to come such as 'even more hospital inefficiencies' or 'this job is hard'.

Communication could be defined as a key theme throughout the book, from communication to patients when signposting to the 'Department of Diagnostic Imaging' also known as x-ray, to reasoning with patients who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs and teamwork in a cardiac arrest situation. Edwards underlines many examples of conversation we are all familiar with. Nevertheless, he is not afraid to talk about those more difficult conversations relating to complaints or misdiagnosis; examples include forgetting to give local anaesthetic before suturing a wound and missing a wrist fracture. Written in an empathetic manner it shows we all deal with a degree of uncertainty every day and by sharing his own doubts, fears and mistakes Edwards brings warmth to scenarios encountered.

Alongside the political humour, Edwards includes heart breaking and often sad situations to bring sincerity to the book. This highlights the reality and need for emotional intelligence to enable clinicians to cope with the job. One example included a lady in her 70s who presented unconscious and acutely unwell who was found to have a perforated bowel; emergency surgery led to a full recovery. One of these more difficult scenarios was talking about a 13 year old presenting with abdominal symptoms, all the tests were normal but on further investigation it turned out she had watched her mother die only a few months ago. Edwards shows how A&E deals with highs and lows, which could be arguably transferred to many medical settings.

Edwards ends with some rather reflective thoughts, which are more sincere than the political humour carried through the rest of the book. I would recommend this book to those who would like a reflective, humorous and relatable read, or perhaps those outside the medical profession who are interested in what really happens in A&E from the eyes of the medics.