**TAMAR FACULTY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS**

1. **Understanding the role of the general practitioner**

It is particularly difficult for medical students to get inside the minds of experienced GPs and to understand why the job is so satisfying.

*Two books help:*

*A Fortunate Man* by John Berger and Paul Mohr London: Penguin Press

Can be read at different levels.

*The Longest Art* by Dr Kenneth Lane *(*former westcountry GP) London: RCGP

Illustrates continuity of care. Easy to read.

1. **The role of the GP**

**GP-patient relationships**

This classic lecture was given by Professor Ian McWhinney of Canada, then the leading GP Professor, world-wide. Emphasises GP-patient relationships

McWhinney IR (1996) The Importance of Being Different William Pickles Lecture *British Journal* *of General Practice;* **56***:*433-36.

**Divided we fail**

Iona Heath, a former President of the RCGP delivered a classic Harvean Oration which discusses how science and humanity blend in general practice. This has inspired some medical students.

Heath I Divided we Fail 2011 Harvean Oration *Clinical Medicine* 2011***;*11**: 576-86

1. **Continuity of care**

This a fundamental aspect of general practice but is difficult to witness and experience on short-term attachments. Few medical students get the chance to witness continuous care over time

A review of research on continuity of care from Exeter is:

Pereira Gray D Evans PH Sweeney KG *et al.* (2003) Towards a theory of continuity of care *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine;* **96 :**160-166

1. **Family Medicine**

It can be very difficult for students to see and understand the medicine of families. One good book on this is:

*Family Medicine—The Medical Life History of Families* by Professor FJA HuygenRe-published by the Royal College of General Practitioners

Includes figures showing how illness in one member of a family can affect other family members.

1. **Home visiting**

Home visiting is a feature of British general practice and although practised less nowadays can provide important information for general practitioners. A James Mackenzie Lecture considered the place of home visits in general practice.

Pereira Gray D Feeling at home. James Mackenzie Lecture 1977 *Journal of the Royal College of* *General Practitioners* 1978; **28:** 6-1

1. **General practice relating to a registered list of patients**

In addition to providing personal care for individual patients, general practitioners are responsible the whole registered list of their patients. One well known article on this is :

Tudor Hart J Semi-continuous screening of a whole community for hypertension *Lancet* 1970; **296**:223-6

1. **General practice influencing health systems and hospital work**

Baicker K and Chandra A (2004) Medicare spending, the physician workforce, and beneficiaries’ quality of care *Health Affairs;* 10.1377/hltheaff.W4.184

It is hard to understand how general practice work influences the work of hospital doctors and can improve the efficiency of the healthcare system generally. This short article explains how.

1. **Health inequalities**

It was a general practitioner, Julian Tudor Hart in a single-handed practice in Wales, who described the Inverse Care Law. This is now known world-wide and has influenced successive British Governments for decades.

Tudor Hart J (1971) The Inverse Care Law *Lancet;* 297: 405-12

1. **Ameliorating socio-economic disadvantage**

General practitioners have the privilege of being the members of the medical profession who are best placed to ameliorate socio-economic disadvantage. In several conditions GPs can abolish it. One British paper on this is:

Wilson T Roland M and Ham C (2006) The contribution of general practitioners and general practice to NHS patients *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine;* **99**: 24-28

1. **Breadth of the role**

The best overview of the whole range of contributions of general practice/primary care to western health systems is set out at length by Professor Barbara Starfield and her colleagues. This is 50 pages long and so takes time and thought, but is one of the best overviews ever published.

Starfield B Shi L and Macenko J Contribution of Primary Care to Health Systems and Health *The Milbank Quarterly* 2005; **83**:457-502

**Other key messages**

The most quoted book on general practice in the last 50 years is Balint M (1957) *The Doctor, His Patient,* *and the Illness* London:Pitman.  It is not listed here as medical students and GP trainees have found reading the whole book is heavy going.

However, at least five of its messages are still fundamental in general practice today and students are advised to discuss them with GP tutors.

**CONCLUSION**

This reading list is provisional. It has been constructed by several people including members of the Faculty Board of the Tamar Faculty of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Additions will be easy to make. Suggestions or criticisms are welcome, particularly from medical students.

Feedback from students is requested.

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