TEACHING HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

TEACHING HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

A Practical Guide

FRED ABBATT
and
ROSEMARY
McMAHON

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MACMILLAN

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Foreword

The concept of primary health care in the mid-1980s is very different from what it was 30 years ago. No longer primarily concerned with treating the sick, primary health care is not general practice or curative care with a few immunisations and some health teaching taken to the people. Primary health care depends on community involvement and participation, not only in carrying out the programme, but in the planning and preparation for it.

If primary health care is so different from our old concepts of medical care then we also need a very different teaching from that which is offered to, say, medical students or postgraduates. This teaching covers new and very different ground. It is also very difficult to provide as those who are taught will not just be using technologies to treat or prevent illnesses. They will be also working with the community to change the whole background in which these occur. This book is not concerned so much with teaching the actual part-time or village health worker, who so often is illiterate or semi-literate. Rather it is aiming to teach those who will be the local team-leaders of these village health workers—the medical assistants, nurses, or whatever they are called in different countries.

Fred Abbatt and Rosemary McMahon are ideally suited to write this. Few can bring so much experience. Fred Abbatt for the last 6 years has been running the highly successful course at Liverpool to train teachers of primary health care workers. Running such a course he has been in contact with such workers from around the world. He has also worked with WHO, The British Council and the UK Overseas Development Administration in many countries. This work has involved training teachers and the development of teaching programmes for health workers.

Rosemary McMahon was employed by WHO to help develop several auxiliary training programmes in Tanzania where, since independence, emphasis has been put on the training of medical assistants as the backbone of their health service. She also assisted in the development of the Rural Health series of manuals for auxiliaries published by AMREF, has worked as a consultant for World Bank funded health programmes in several countries, and has recently developed a national training programme for Community Health Officers in Sierra Leone.

This book emphasises the new knowledge and understanding of the learning process. For me it was one of the first books that I have read that has gone into, in detail, the training of the attitudes of the workers as well as detail as to how to train workers in the necessary communication skills,

decision-making skills and knowledge to provide health care.

Introduction of the methods suggested in this book will lead to a dramatic change and, I believe, improvement in the training of all levels of paramedical workers. Perhaps this success will lead to the adoption of some of these methods in the training of medical students where perhaps the need for such training is equally as great.

Although aimed primarily at teachers in less-developed countries, there will be real value in this book to teachers in the West. Probably few books put so concisely how to develop the methods of designing course programmes, teaching the programmes and evaluating their success. Rosemary McMahon and Fred Abbatt are to be congratulated on their very real contribution to bringing in 'Health for all by 2000'.

London, 1985

David Morley
*Professor of Child Health
Institute of Child Health*

How to Use this Book

This book is a result of the authors' concern and involvement in the teaching of health-care workers in many countries. Whilst dramatic changes are taking place in the numbers of health workers trained and in the type of health care being provided, the type of training offered has not changed sufficiently. Often, the training emphasises the learning of detailed facts. The practical work and field experience may be poorly supervised and sometimes ineffective.

The aim of this book is to help teachers to rethink their whole approach to training and so to overcome these criticisms. The first two chapters describe the background of primary health care (a policy which has been adopted in nearly every country) and the role of the teacher.

Chapters 3 to 6 explain how teachers can be much more precise about what they want their students to learn. The technique of 'task analysis' is suggested which leads to clear distinctions between the different types of things which must be learnt, the knowledge and attitudes, the skills of communication and decision-making, the manual or psychomotor skills.

This definition of what needs to be learnt provides the basis for planning overall course programmes, planning the assessment of students and choosing teaching methods. These processes are described in chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The teaching methods which are most appropriate for each of the five areas of learning are then described with specific examples in chapters 10 to 14, with a final chapter on evaluating courses.

This book will not mean that teachers will be able to spend less time in teaching or that their work will be easier; rather, the authors hope that teachers will find their work more satisfying and more varied, that their students will learn more quickly and that the students will be equipped to provide a better quality of health care.

Liverpool and Sierra Leone, 1985

F. A.
R. McM.

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