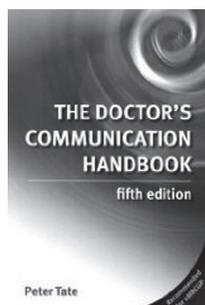


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Adèle Pope is currently enjoying being a Trainee Intern at Middlemore Hospital. When she is not studying or doing research, she likes playing netball or her cello and is an Asian drama addict (thanks to her sister who lives in Taiwan).



The Doctor's Communication Handbook.

5th Revised Edition.

Peter Tate

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Doctor-patient relationships for dummies? The Doctor's Communication Handbook is not as simplistic as that, but does provide an easy-going approach to patient-centered communication. The author, Peter Tate, has worked as a GP in the UK, as well as an examiner for MRCP (equivalent to the RNZCGP) and a communication issues lecturer. Tate draws on personal experiences and relevant research for this fifth edition, assisting training GPs and medical students in improving their clinical skills.

The thirteen chapters of the Handbook cover a range of topics, from

detailing how doctors approach patients to wider communication concepts and ethical issues. These chapters improve the reader's awareness of their own perspective when they talk with patients and how patients perceive them. There are some common sense suggestions made in the Useful Strategies and Special Situations chapters, while the chapter on patient categorisation is somewhat obscured by jargon. Fortunately this is not the case for the rest of the text.

Each chapter contains a few points worth remembering before, during and after talking to a patient. The shaded boxes give examples of routine doctor-patient conversations contrasted with a more thoughtful version of the dialogue from the would-be doctor. Some of the suggestions are not practical on a daily basis, such as evaluating consultations by plotting a consultation map. The use of lists and bullet pointing, however, reminds the reader to determine patients' agendas rather than their own and listen to what their patients are saying before diagnosing them.

Doctor-patient communication skills evolve with practise and Tate acknowledges this throughout his book. The Handbook is a slim book, priced at around \$100. It can easily be brought out in a consultation in order to refocus on patient-centered communication. Tate's writing style is honest and engaging, although it can be too conversational at times. The book is most appropriate for those students heading down the GP career path.