

## Books & Electronic Media

### Creating knowledge-based healthcare organizations

Editors: Nilmini Wickramasinghe, Jatinder N. D. Gupta, Sushil Sharma  
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According to the editors, the aim of this book is to increase awareness in the health sector of the need to embrace knowledge management. On the one hand, healthcare is facing the twin challenges of escalating costs and increasing demands for quality. On the other, there is growing recognition that healthcare organizations are knowledge-intensive and that they need to manage their information- and knowledge-bases more effectively. The central message of the book is that by harnessing knowledge management strategies, processes, tools and techniques, healthcare organizations can create greater value by delivering higher quality services more cost effectively.

The book comprises 24 chapters written by 51 authors. It is divided into four sections, which form a logical sequence that moves along the path from concept to practice. The first section (Knowledge management in the healthcare industry) consists of four chapters and begins by introducing knowledge management as a set of principles and processes, before going on to outline the forces in healthcare that are driving

the need to embrace it. The second section (Approaches, frameworks and tools to create knowledge-based healthcare organizations), at nine chapters the longest, introduces an array of knowledge management tools and techniques, and discusses the impact of the internet, the use of data mining and knowledge discovery tools, medical records management, evidence-based medicine, and quality management. Section three (Key issues and concerns of various knowledge management implementations—evidence from practice) consists of six case studies that cover a wide range of healthcare organizations: a national hospital in Japan, telemedicine in New Zealand, a disability service in Australia, public hospitals in Ireland, and the pharmaceutical industry in India. The final section (Managing knowledge as an asset in healthcare organizations) has six chapters, three of which deal with measuring the contribution of knowledge management to business performance.

The main strength of the book is its international approach, covering as it does research and case studies from Asia, Australia, Brazil, India, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, and USA. There is a clear emphasis on systems and process architectures, planning frameworks, and data security. Useful chapters examine the connection between knowledge management and evidence-based medicine, quality management and patient safety.

The book generally presents a sanguine view of knowledge management that highlights the power of technology to manage data and information efficiently. However, managing information is not the same as managing knowledge. Effective knowledge management is highly contingent on a large number of non-technological conditions: the culture of the healthcare organization, the norms and status of different professions, the structure of the healthcare industry, and the regulatory and policy environment. The book could have benefited from a thoughtful consideration of these issues.

Bearing in mind its strengths and limitations, the reader who is looking for a book on knowledge management that relates directly to the healthcare arena, and who is particularly interested in the application of information systems in its support, will be well served by this monograph. ■

Chun Wei Choo<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor, Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto, 140, St. George Street, Toronto, ON, M5S 3G6, Canada (email: [cw.choo@utoronto.ca](mailto:cw.choo@utoronto.ca)).