

### Clinical Practice and the Law – a legal primer for clinicians

Giles Eyre

This is an excellent book and although I approached it with some trepidation, fearing vast expanses of incomprehensible jargon, it is the exact opposite. It is concise at 160 pages and describes all the important concepts with impressive clarity.

Both the legal and medical professions have long histories of their own cultures and a degree of mistrust of each other but what the book makes clear is that there are times when they have to interact. The natural fear that any doctor may have about having their work scrutinised can be reduced simply by adhering to what is generally accepted as good professional standards.

During his years in practice, Giles had extensive experience in conducting and advising in personal injury and clinical negligence claims of all kinds. Giles' personal injury practice arose from work place and road accidents, as well as claims relating to occupational health issues. This book reflects this wealth of experience, reaching into all medico legal areas with good examples.

The book opens with insights into the legal mind, particularly the use of words, logic and reasoning, and how they really expect to see these in action in medicine as well. It is particularly important to use words clearly, with the precise meaning in context. One example from the clinical field would be to say a patient was "better", which could either mean improved or completely cured.

There is necessarily a great deal on evidence and its various forms, e.g. direct, hearsay, oral, witness, and documentary evidence.

It is reassuring to note that a medical opinion is more easily supported when the accompanying facts and reasoning are displayed. The days are gone when the expert, however experienced, can simply say "this is Castleman's disease because I say it is", the findings that led to the conclusion should be sufficient to show why the conclusion was made. The helpful summary statements such as "Explain decision-making; show your reasoning" throughout the book ensure that the key points make an impact.

The content includes chapters on proof, preparing a witness statement, acting as an expert, records and making notes, and helping the police. Some issues will not be common for pathologists but we need to be aware of them, such as communication with patients, patients in custody, and mental capacity. The important subject of When things go Wrong is very helpful, with the essential principles clearly explained in a manner that reflects real-world experience.

The final statement in his 'Author's note' says: "If you think there is something the next edition should include, let me know – I too am happy to learn.", showing his commitment to continuous improvement and how we can and should continue to read, discuss, and learn.

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