

Book Reviews

Long-Term Care: Managing Across the Continuum, 2nd Edition

John R. Pratt

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Reviewed by Carol Common

Long-term care is coming out of its hidden corner and taking a more prominent and proactive role in the health-care system. This is the theme of *Long-Term Care: Managing Across the Continuum*. While the book's main target readership is current and future administrators in long-term care, it will be useful reading for any health-care professional who deals with aspects of long-term care and wishes to be more informed about it — that is, anyone whose clientele includes persons who are elderly or handicapped.

The book deals with the themes of management and administration. It is also American and, since the issues of administration are often related to the environmental context, such topics as funding, regulations, competition, and market drivers may not be applicable to the single, public-payer system in Canada. Other issues, such as ethics, types of care and their philosophies, trends, and driving forces, can well cross boundaries.

The book offers a comprehensive view of the field as it exists today in the United States, including strengths and weaknesses. Pratt also describes “criteria for evaluation and design of long-term care,” acknowledging that the system falls short on many of the criteria. He describes the types of long-term and supportive care for the elderly and handicapped that are included in the long-term-care system, both institutional and non-institutional. For each of these types of care, the author describes the philosophy of care; the consumers; the services provided; the market forces; issues of ownership, regulation, finances, and human resources; legal and ethical issues; management challenges; and current trends and their impact. The types of care described are: nursing facilities (institutional care for a clientele requiring both supportive and specialized care), assisted living (room and board with minimal nursing support), sub-acute care (short-stay clientele with nursing and rehabilitation needs following an acute-care hospitalization), adult day care (offering activities to promote functional autonomy and respite to home caregivers), home health care (support for activities of daily living and

specialized nursing care), and hospice care (end-of-life care at home or in an institution).

Since the book's subtitle is *Managing Across the Continuum*, Pratt devotes several chapters to the issues of how long-term-care agencies relate to each other, to other health-care providers in the system, to government agencies, and to the communities they serve. Issues include competition and collaboration as well as various forms of integration among agencies. These chapters focus largely on financial issues and quality of care and, despite the American context, offer management insights that apply to other systems as well.

Other aspects of long-term care that are reviewed in the book include regulations, reimbursement structures, governance and administration, information technology, marketing and community relations, and ethical and legal issues.

The final chapters focus on future trends and actions that managers can take. These are useful and applicable to any health-care system. The trends described include the increasing proportion of elderly in the population, the drive towards more coordination among providers of health care, the variety of delivery systems (e.g., institutional versus home care), outcomes-based quality indicators, advances in information technology, and ethical choices. Pratt outlines the various strategies that managers can use to deal with issues currently impacting the system, as well as to prepare for future trends. The strategies include listening to clients, engaging in integrated care, and building a learning organization.

This book provides useful insights for senior and middle managers in health care, in particular those serving long-term-care populations.

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