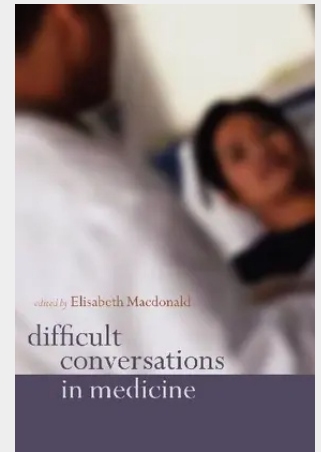


Difficult Conversations in Medicine

In all branches of medicine, effective communication between health care professionals and patients, families and carers is essential to ensure first-class treatment. Increasing public awareness of health issues and the ready availability of health information have lead the public to be more widely informed about common conditions and the treatments available. Patients therefore attend a medical consultation better informed so the need for improved communication skills is even greater. This book aims to demystify the 'doctor-patient' relationship in order that patients and potential patients can more easily understand the information which doctors are seeking to convey as well as gaining some insight into the difficulties of communication from a doctor's perspective. Some conversations require specialised skills. Talking to people with difficult personalities and poor social skills can be challenging. Strong emotions of anger, frustration or distress need sensitive handling and particular age groups call on styles of address appropriate to their particular needs. Using the expertise of experienced doctors from many specialties this book covers not only the theory behind good communication skills but also gives a wealth of practical advice. The book covers ethical and legal issues, planning difficult conversations, the patient's and doctor's perspectives, issues surrounding special groups such as children and the elderly, and conversations with patients from different cultural backgrounds. Outlines of possible clinical cases posing specific problems are included with guidance on how to handle them.

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