

The Health of the Nation

22 January, 2016 By [Ibadete Fetahu](#)

'This is a fascinating book, which I really enjoyed reading and it would be a good read for all health care workers'

Title: The Health of the Nation

Author: David Owen

Publisher: Methuen & Co

Reviewer: Kerry Bloodworth, assistant director of nursing, Nottingham University Hospitals.

What was it like?

This was a surprisingly enjoyable read. When the book arrived for review I thought it was going to be political and dry especially (written in quite small print) as it was written by a former Health secretary. The book goes back to the origins of the NHS through the eyes of David Owen who I thought stayed apolitical throughout the book, looking back at both his parliamentary and medical career. The book was rich in personal comments from a variety of contributors. The book described the role of the EU and their contributions and complications which affect the NHS today. This gave me a different viewpoint and complexities of what it must be like to organise and run the NHS of today.

Another positive aspect of the book was that it held the patient at the centre and was challenging in sections of the book of the paternalistic view of healthcare workers usually Dr's that they knew best for their patients. When patients were asked to comment they often gave a different view point e.g. top priority for patients undergoing chemotherapy, doctors reckoned that extending life was the key priority for 96% of patients, when the patients were asked only 59% agreed. An interesting chapter was about the marketization of the NHS and I didn't realise how much recent legislation stems from the EU and how this affects how the NHS works today.

The book is quite varied looking at the history and impact of the political decisions which made been made over the decades and the impact on today's NHS and the impact of patients who use both primary and secondary care.

What were the highlights?

This is a fascinating book, which I really enjoyed reading; it would be a good read for all health care workers, it gives a depth of understanding and appreciation of the intricacies of how the NHS functions but also explains in great detail why the NHS has become a bargaining chip for all the political parties. The book has numerous references, not only in professional journals, newspaper's, but from the political arena and personal comments from contributors.

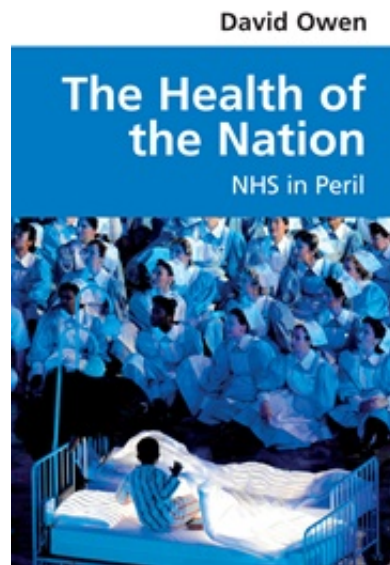
Strengths & weaknesses:

The strength of the book is the current timeframe with the general election looming, this book gives such a background of knowledge about key decisions that have been made at different points in time, which has given shape to the NHS we are working in today. The passion from David Owen as the author comes through and his choice of illustration for the front cover of the book from the 2012 opening ceremony from the Olympics' backs up this view, to attract readers to the book.

Who should read it?

This book can be read and enjoyed by any one, not just from a healthcare background; it would be interesting for non-clinical staff as often clinical staff are not politically astute as we need to be. The timing of this book is perfect if you want to read and may or may not influence your decision as to which party to vote for in May.

Note from the editor: Apologies to all the readers for publishing this very late!



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