

Medical Law in New Zealand

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General Editors: Peter Skegg, Ron Paterson

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It seems entirely appropriate in an issue of *NZFP* focussing on medical mistakes to review *Medical Law in New Zealand*. This book is a collaborative compilation from the Law Faculties of Auckland and Otago Universities. The authors are all lawyers with a special interest in medico-legal matters. It is as up-to-date as a textbook can be with reference to the law as at 1 September 2006.

This is not the sort of book that most doctors will sit and read from cover to cover in their leisure time. It is a textbook and is written in the style of a legal publication with frequent references to footnotes listing cases and authorities. This does not lend to easy reading but, I suspect, many lawyers would feel the same way about reading evidence-based medical texts.

Medical Law in New Zealand is comprehensive with some overlap of material that would be very difficult to avoid given the multiple authorship. There are sections of particular rel-

evance to general practice. For example in Joanna Manning's chapter on 'the required standard of care for treatment' there is a lengthy section addressing the basic standards of care expected of general practitioners. Other sections of particular relevance to GPs are the chapters explaining the complexities of health information law and the chapter on treatment injury that takes into account the changes introduced in July 2005 that have impacted on all GPs.

The book is well indexed and is formatted with running page headers that help considerably when searching for a particular topic.

This book should be accessible by everyone working in the health care industry. It should be available and considered as an essential resource in all New Zealand teaching practices.

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Cole's Medical Practice in New Zealand 2007

ISBN-10: 0-9582792-0-9

Editor: Ian St George

Publisher: Medical Council of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand, October 2006.

Available from the Medical Council of New Zealand or download individual chapters at:

<http://www.mcnz.org.nz/Publications/Reportsandpublications/tabid/82/ctl/Edit/mid/476/www.mcnz.org.nz/Publications/Reportsandpublications/ColesMedicalPracticeinNewZealand/tabid/261/Default.aspx>

This updated edition of *Medical Practice in New Zealand* also has multiple authors, many of whom are general practitioners. It is easier (for this general practitioner reviewer) to read than *Medical Law in New Zealand* and its focus is really on how to avoid getting into a situation in which Medical Law might be personally and frighteningly relevant. The sections cover the organisation of medical care in New Zealand with particular reference to legislation, communication, collaboration, management, scholarship, professionalism and what to do when things go wrong.

This is the book that every health care practitioner should read before they get into trouble. It is of particular relevance to those starting in practice in New Zealand both new graduates and overseas trained doctors. However, reflecting on your own practice and introducing changes that ensure continuing high quality patient care and good communication is an ongoing process that should be undertaken by all health care practitioners. This book can help with this and is worth keeping in your office.

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