



Claudia Rijcken (ed): Pharmaceutical care in digital revolution, insights towards circular innovation

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This is an impressive book, to which 6 authors contribute. The editor has written many chapters and shared valuable thoughts. She obviously is a very experienced digital innovator in the world of pharmaceuticals and pharmacy, with a lot of knowledge and insight.

In this book, the new digital world for pharmacy is depicted as a forest, in which the pharmacy professionals and others involved in pharmaceutical care, must still find their way. But to be honest, I am only a poor down-to-earth pharmacist and editor. If the chapters are my guide, the guides are sometimes too sophisticated for me. There is a lot, a lot of modern management-talk in the book, and terminology that is not part of every pharmacy day. It runs from the Internet of Things (IoT), to the Internet of Medical Things (IoMT) to the Internet of Health (IoH) with all their subtle differences. We go from exabytes to petabytes, but I miss the individual patient, his or her medicines and the pharmacist. Instead there are virtual pharmacists with Pharmbots and they are thought to be created for the patients' convenience. It would give patients access to 24/7 self-care, while it would help payers to cut down unnecessary patient visits and reduce out-of-hour staff costs.

With the increasing digital developments, the individual patient seems to become less interesting, almost an unnecessary annoyance to the health care system. His data are being collected, merged with other data, worked, evaluated statistically and suddenly the individual becomes an exception to the general rule of means and medians. A web of companies is built around his data, companies who will tell him that

he needs more tools, more pills, pay more, and need to rely more on what data tell him.

After scanning this book, it once again becomes obvious to me that the medical and pharmaceutical world are increasingly part of, and influenced by the normal commercial powers. Needs are being created, managed, and answered in a never ending sequence. The digital healthcare world has opened (too) many possibilities for healthcare and pharmacy, and is producing too many data, that too many people want to analyse in order to discover and define new needs. Big money has discovered healthcare. This circular innovation is unstoppable, but probably should be regarded with much more concern in healthcare. Perhaps I am being too negative, but this is what the book did to me. The sheer universe of the digital revolution and its potential impact on our profession and patients frightens me. Therefore it is helpful that has been listed all, in one book.

So back to pharmaceutical care, the “pharmacist's contribution to the care of individuals, in order to optimize medicines use and improve health outcomes” [1]. How does this concept fit into the digital revolution?

All ‘Future Thoughts’ that are the final words of the book, bring the reader back to reality. What a relief! Especially “Future Thought 5” illustrates that a pharmacist nowadays must be able to interpret digital patient data “Not all pharmaceutical care providers need to be data scientists, but every pharmaceutical care provider needs to have some interest in data science”.

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Or, as the editor says in her final words: “Contemplate the amazing potential you will find in this book, but then come back to earth and fuel the pharmaceutical care ecology with the oxygen it needs.”

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Reference

1. Pharmaceutical Care Network Europe. Homepage. <https://www.pcne.org/>. Accessed 5 Jun 2019.