Improving Health Services
Background, Method and Applications

The late Walter Holland, formerly London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

This insightful book describes how Health Services Research (HSR) can be developed and used to evaluate, advance and improve all aspects of health services. It demonstrates the need for good HSR to avoid the continuation or development of ineffective or cost-inefficient services.

‘For five decades Professor Holland has observed the evolution of Health Services Research in the United Kingdom and internationally from a unique vantage point. The unit he created in St Thomas's Hospital led its development and gave him a platform to influence policy at the highest level. In this enthralling and insightful book he takes us on a grand historical tour, charting the progress that has been made in Health Services Research but, as important, pointing out the lessons from the many missed opportunities along the way.’

– Martin McKee CBE, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK

‘This is a thought-provoking, original and incredibly informative study of how health services research can improve both service practice and policy rather than yet another catalogue of disjointed case studies and initiatives. An absolutely essential read for experts and novices alike.’

– Elias Mossialos, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

‘No-one is better placed to tell the story of health services research over the past 50 years than Walter Holland, a major contributor and advocate. He reveals the cast of characters involved in the scientific struggles for acceptance and the political intrigue required. Unusually for someone who knows where the bodies are buried, he is prepared to share his insights and to exhort today’s researchers never to forget that “HSR and its results are a highly emotive political subject.”’

– Nick Black, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK

‘Reflecting on more than 50 years of personal experience at the interface of epidemiology and health services research, Professor Walter Holland has written a book full of candid and – often – critical observations. He always succeeds in seeing the wood through the trees, and this book convincingly demonstrates the value of research in improving health service practice and policy.’

– Johan Mackenbach, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands

‘In his latest opus, Improving Health Services, Professor Walter Holland, a distinguished health services researcher with a long career in recommending health policy on the basis of evidence, takes on the task of defining the key elements of effective health policy research, its essential multidisciplinary requirements and its optimal but realistic relationship to health policy formulation, implementation and analysis. Few scholars are more qualified to present the history of health services research in the United Kingdom and the United States, the essential elements of sound health services research and to discuss its role in the future of health services in the United Kingdom. It is, therefore, essential reading for scholars in the field and those wishing to pursue a career in the field.’

– Roger Detels, UCLA Schools of Public Health and Medicine, U

‘This book should be regarded as required reading for all those involved in or contemplating careers in this area.’


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‘Prof Holland’s unrivalled experience as a health service researcher and government adviser. It deserves a place in any library serious about supporting the study of health services from a population perspective.’

– Alan Maryon-Davis, Public Health Today

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