

Book Review: Free medical information: Doctor = publisher

With the spread of technology and the internet, it has become easier for doctors to publish textbooks. A doctor who publishes his own textbooks can earn many times what he/she would be paid in royalties by a publishing house. More important is the fact that a doctor who writes and publishes wants his texts to be read by as many colleagues, students and patients as possible. The best way to achieve this is through the free parallel publication of these texts on the internet. Free medical information describes in an easy and practical manner as to how to produce a successful medical textbook.

I was intrigued by the title of the book, as I have written a number of articles for both specialized and non-specialized publications and have also contributed chapters to textbooks. I have not published a textbook or any other book however. The author of this intriguing book, Kamps BS, is the director of the Amadeo project and the founder of Flying Publisher (www.flyingpublisher.com). He is the co-editor of www.hivmedicine.com. He is also involved in many internet projects.

The first chapter looks at traditional publishing models and how they are changing with the advent of technology and the internet. The author has stated that a book should be published simultaneously in a book form and on free internet sites. Self-publishing ensures that authors (doctors) earn two to six times the money that they would get through author's royalties. The author has stated that 100 well produced textbooks can cover over 99% of the common problems and information needs in medicine. In the second chapter, Kamps has advised doctors to write only if they are strongly motivated that their book should become no.1 in their field. Annual supplements should be planned right from the beginning and the internet version can have more information and additional features than the print version. For its economic success, the book should sell more than 1000 copies and it should have an English version also. The author has summarized each chapter under subheadings for editor/

publisher, author, doctor, student and bystander, which I found to be very effective.

In the third chapter, the author has concentrated on getting the train (book) on track. Regarding the style, he has advised to not try to hide unformed thoughts behind complicated phrasing. Writing simply and clearly is the hallmark of a good writer. If a multi-author textbook is being edited, then it is important to create a template to ensure uniformity. Also, the reference style that has been intended to be followed has to be repeatedly stressed to the authors. The editor can use student assistants for maintaining the website and can get sponsorship for the site, but the content of the site should not be influenced by the sponsor. Various distribution channels for textbooks and their advantages and disadvantages have also been discussed. The author has suggested that removing the copyright of the book can facilitate its translation into multiple languages and its wide availability. Also, a pocket edition of the book which will be more widely consulted should be produced. A blog can be used to supplement and add to the internet version. The appendix details working with MS Word and I was intrigued by the keyboard shortcuts. These can save a huge amount of time and energy. The book will be useful for authors who are interested in publishing medical books. More information may be needed than that which has been mentioned in the book and on the Free Medical Information site (www.freemedicalinformation.com) and the Flying Publisher (www.flyingpublisher.com) site may be useful. The AMEDEO project (www.amedeo.com) has links to a number of free medical titles.

About the book: Kamps BS. Free medical information: Doctor = publisher. Flying publisher, Germany 2005. ISBN: 3-924774-47-1. The printed version of this book is available at <http://www.lulu.com/content/448777> and Free Books for doctors are available at www.freebooks4doctors.com.

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