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978-0-521-88206-4 - Acting in Anaesthesia: Ethnographic Encounters with Patients, Practitioners and Medical Technologies

Dawn Goodwin

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Acting in Anaesthesia: Ethnographic Encounters with Patients, Practitioners and Medical Technologies

In recent years, evidence-based medicine (EBM), clinical governance and professional accountability have become increasingly significant in shaping the organization and delivery of health care. However, these notions all build upon and exemplify the idea of human-centred, individual action. In this book, Dawn Goodwin suggests that such models of practice exaggerate the extent to which practitioners are able to predict and control the circumstances and contingencies of health care. Drawing on ethnographic material, Goodwin explores the way that ‘action’ unfolds in a series of empirical cases of anaesthetic and intensive care practice. Anaesthesia configures a relationship between humans, machines and devices that transforms and redistributes capacities for action and thereby challenges the figure of a rational, intentional acting individual. This book elucidates the ways in which various entities (machines, tools, devices and unconscious patients, as well as health care practitioners) participate, and how actions become legitimate and accountable.

Dawn Goodwin is a social science lecturer in medical education and director of problem-based learning. She teaches courses on various aspects of science, technology and medicine to both medical and social science students. Her current research interests focus on the development of embodied knowledge, its place in clinical practice, and the processes of learning involved. Her doctoral and postdoctoral research centred on the notions of participation and accountability in health care practice. Along with colleagues Dr Buscher and Dr Mesman, Dawn Goodwin is currently editing a book of ethnographic studies of diagnostic work drawn from a range of disciplines.

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Series Foreword

This series for Cambridge University Press is widely known as an international forum for studies of situated learning and cognition.

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successful learning wherever it occurs. The series invites contributions that advance our understanding of these seminal issues.

Roy Pea
Christian Heath
Lucy Suchman

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