

## Book Review

Bruce Lubotsky Levin, John Petrila and Kevin D. Hennessy. "Mental Health Services: A Public Health Perspective", 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

The book is an extremely valuable resource for health services researchers investigating mental health issues as well as for instructors of courses with a focus on mental health services. It is thoughtfully structured and covers the most important aspects of current mental health services. This is relevant given, as the authors themselves point out, the rapid pace of change in the field of mental health in the last decade. The authors' decision to provide a comprehensive list of articles at the end of each chapter provides a valuable tool for the reader.

The book is excellent as a source of policy background in the mental health and substance abuse area. It thoroughly covers the relevant mental health and substance abuse issues for public policy such as service delivery, legal and criminal justice issues, special populations' concerns and the role of family in recovery. The future of public mental health institutions is critical since there has been a rash of closures in many states due to budget cuts. The social burden of these closures has not yet been well studied and realized. This book offers a strong background regarding their history and role in mental health care service provision. A case study from Pennsylvania is used to show the benefits of a jail-based post-booking diversion program in discussing the criminal justice aspects of mental health. There are socio-economic conditions causing and resulting in mental health problems such as homelessness. Of course, both psychiatric hospital closures and failures in the criminal justice system to attend adequately to the needs of the mentally ill will increase the problem of homelessness. The authors also recognize that while family members are significant for healing of physical ailments, they are imperative in recovery of mental health, and this book explains their contribution as well as the factors that led to the recovery movement.

The authors also make an important distinction between pediatric adolescent and elderly mental health issues, as well as the

special needs of minority populations. This age division is necessary given that mental health conditions can be diverse among children and adults and even when they are the same diagnoses, their management may necessarily be different. It also addresses the important linkage between aging diseases such as Alzheimer's and mental health issues. One of the largest economic issues is the financial burden of mental health on Medicare. Since the vast majority of the elderly have Medicare as their sole insurer, the efficiency of provision is of foremost priority to the policymakers responsible for this program. The book does a good job focusing on this concern.

Also covered is a topic which is presently a major focus for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and for health services researchers - the co-occurrence of mental health and addictive disorders. This chapter includes an analysis of the relationship between the two and the role of assessment, treatment principles, and finishes with an extensive description of a case study of barriers to administrative integration.

All researchers and instructors in mental health services should have this book as a part of their toolkit. It touches on every aspect of mental health of possible import. However, it is very limited from a health economist's perspective. It excludes the numerous publications of two of the most prominent substance abuse health economists, Michael French and Jody Sindelar. There has been some very important work done by these economists that would shed light on many of the topics that the authors already discuss.

From a personal research perspective, it would also be helpful to see pregnant women as a special risk population since their mental illness and substance abuse problems affect not only their own utilization and outcomes but also that of their children.

**Clara E. Dismuke**

Assistant Professor

Medical University of South Carolina

Charleston, South Carolina, USA