are particularly important improvements considering the generally held view that South Asian people present with physical complaints. None the less, some respondents did complain of unequal and unfair treatment, of being made to feel inferior or intimidated, and feelings of frustration and helplessness. Visiting and engaging with clients in their own homes, engaging with their families, and being flexible about offering advice and practical support, were all valued. These devices were all used to engage the clients in treatment which later took on a more conventional form. Not all clients, however, wanted to be ethnically matched. A complaint often heard by health professionals is that Asian people ‘don’t get it’ and want a different form of intervention, perhaps more concrete forms of advice and instrumental or practical help. This report illustrates how providing an innovative response to such requests can lead to effective use of counselling services, and that Asian people do ‘get it’ after all.

Kamaldeep Bhui

Clinical Guidelines in Old Age Psychiatry


First there was the publication of Assessment Scales in Old Age Psychiatry in 1999, providing a comprehensive collection of scales to measure the various manifestations of mental and physical diseases affecting older people. Now, the formidable duo Burns and Lawlor return, having teamed up with Tom Dening to produce another user-friendly companion. Clinical Guidelines in Old Age Psychiatry provides a source of direct and systematic advice to people working in, and responsible for, services for older people. It aims to improve the quality of patient care as well as achieving more standardised and acceptable outcomes. The guidelines give details of one outcome study in which clients, diagnosed as ‘best buy’ cases, were all valued. These devices were all used to engage the clients in treatment which later took on a more conventional form. Not all clients, however, wanted to be ethnically matched. A complaint often heard by health professionals is that Asian people ‘don’t get it’ and want a different form of intervention, perhaps more concrete forms of advice and instrumental or practical help. This report illustrates how providing an innovative response to such requests can lead to effective use of counselling services, and that Asian people do ‘get it’ after all.

Kamaldeep Bhui

Therapeutic Communities for the Treatment of Drug Users


This multi-author review by British editors is divided into background, history and current situation, ‘life-in’, variations on the model and, finally, research and evaluation. Multi-authorship has led to overlaps. It was pleasing to see the early pioneers described as ‘charismatic free-thinkers’, imbued with ideological viewpoints and passion. Were there no evidence-based practice protocols? Within a referenced history, there are ample quotes from residents outlining the changes leading to the ‘new therapeutic communities’. Central throughout have been the Encounter Groups with the experience evolving; the move from behaviour modification to social learning, from confrontation to motivation. Also, there is the tension between professional input and the focus of the community being ‘self-help’ and ‘here and now’, plus the gradual erosion of insider/outside divisions, to becoming part of the wider community.

Inevitably, many guidelines are consensus statements or practice policies, due to the lack of evidence from randomised controlled trials and other research studies. Most guidelines currently in use originate from professional bodies such as the various Royal Colleges and diverse national and international organisations. The use of the single assessment process will certainly increase. Hopefully, public agencies and patient groups will have a greater involvement in the preparation of future editions of this book.

Considering the wealth of guidelines and statements on a multitude of aspects relating to older people’s lives, the absence of any guidance on sexual health and relationships remains remarkable, particularly as the prevalence of sexual dysfunction is highest in this group. However, this is a minor criticism and no doubt the next edition will expand on this topic.

I highly recommend this book, not only to all aspiring and practising colleagues in the field, but to everyone aiming to improve both quantity and quality of services for older people in the broadest sense.

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The Human Rights Act and Mental Health


It seems fashionable these days to combine the written word with an audio-