

Reviews

Intelligent Kindness: Reforming the Culture of Healthcare

John Ballatt & Penelope Campling
RCPsych Publications, 2011, £25.00, pb, 208 pp.
ISBN: 9781908020048

Combining their extensive managerial and clinical experience, John Ballatt and Penelope Campling put forward an interesting view on what they think has gone wrong with healthcare and how they feel it can be fixed. The book looks at the delivery of care and service design from a very different angle to most current texts on the topic. The authors extensively unpick system failings, drawing on some of the recent highlights in healthcare such as Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust report and government policy initiatives including the current legislation.

Although I cannot say that I agreed with everything the book had to say about the current state of healthcare and its future direction, it certainly caused me to stop and think. It makes an impassioned case to think again about how we design and deliver healthcare in the interests of our patients to rediscover the caring side of our profession and why we went into healthcare in the first place. The book is not always easy to read as Ballatt and Campling often challenge the status quo. They explore in depth what makes up kindness and why they think it is currently missing from the health service, and are clearly passionate in the belief that healthcare can be improved with kindness. I was disappointed that the book ended where it did as I hoped for a clearer plan on how their thinking could be realised in practice and perhaps even some examples of where they saw it being currently applied in healthcare.

This book is aimed at anyone interested in the current state of affairs in health. It challenges those of us who are trying to improve services in the face of the sudden changes and swingeing cuts, to remember that caring for our patients is central to what we do and that kindness is at the heart of that. If you are looking for a challenging read that may make you feel quite uncomfortable about the state of current care and at times quite angry, but also reminds you of why you do what you do, then this book could be for you.

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Mental Health and Care Homes

Edited by Tom Denning & Alisoun Milne
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One in five older people will become resident in care homes and they are likely to be experiencing higher rates of mental illness than those older people who live in the community. Our approach needs to become more systematic and evidence based and this book aims to fill a gap in the market.

Multi-author books by definition do not have the same coherence as single-author books; however, they allow for very different views on the same topic to be collected together. The editors have commissioned a diverse group of authors to approach this subject and the chapters are arranged into four subject areas.

The individual chapters are generally well written and cover topics ranging from a resident's view of living in a care home to an international perspective on long-term care. The clinical chapters on physical health, depression and dementia give good, concise accounts of their topics. There are chapters with an academic focus such as that reviewing the research evidence on how individuals with dementia view their own care. Space is also given to those with a non-academic background. In one chapter, a carer offers his own views on the prescription of antipsychotic medication: 'I can only wonder yet again how many of these professional dispensers of wisdom have ever had to cope with care', referring to those who oppose the use of antipsychotic drugs for patients with dementia.

Readers will dip in and out of the book as it is not something that many will read in one go. It provides a reliable source of material and an entry point into the wider literature. Who will benefit from reading this? Those who work in and run care homes and of course clinicians who work there. Carers who want to find out more about the care system, what the rules governing homes are and what treatments and therapies are available will also find a lot of relevant information. This volume gives an excellent overview of an important topic and is recommended reading for old age psychiatrists from higher trainees upwards.

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