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Mosby's Pocketbook of Mental Health. Eimear Muir-Cochrane, Patricia Barkway and Debra Nizette,

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BOOK REVIEW

“Mosby’s Pocketbook of Mental Health”

Eimear Muir-Cochrane, Patricia Barkway and Debra Nizette,
Elsevier, Australia, 2010.

ISBN: 978-0-7295-3931-9 (Paperback) \$AU42.75 (RRP including GST)

Reviewed by

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This book is published by Mosby and is described on its jacket as a “convenient, user-friendly resource for all health professionals, offering students and practitioners practical strategies to ensure appropriate and effective responses to people in crisis”. The authors are all distinguished academics and qualified nurses, working in mental health care and education.

The text aims to translate the core aspects of engaging people with mental health problems into practical strategies, an aim that could well be suited to the abbreviated pocketbook format. Unfortunately, the authors struggle to develop mental health management or strategies in any depth, the final product a broad but superficial overview of mental health care.

As identified in the first chapter, the text has been developed using a ‘recovery’ framework. The authors then go on to discuss issues such as the universal principles of mental health care and mental state assessments. These chapters are well written and provide sufficient information to be useful for readers, though I question if the use of a recovery framework is the most appropriate for the selected format.

A review of further chapters illustrates concerns regarding the lack of development in the book, with culture and mental health, common mental illnesses, psychiatric emergencies, managing medications, contemporary talking therapies, co-occurring medical problems, loss and grief, law and ethics and settings for mental healthcare all identified as separate chapters. While these areas seem appropriate for a mental health textbook, it seems a stretch for 172 small pages!

Positively, the pocketbook does include some of the advertised practical strategies for managing clients when they are mentally unwell. These strategies could be developed further by sacrificing less relevant chapters, such as the co-occurring medical problems chapter.

A nursing centric perspective is apparent throughout the text. As the pocketbook has been targeted at a broad range of health practitioners, it would benefit from a multidisciplinary perspective during the editing process. A lack of continuity is also apparent in the chapter outlining common mental illnesses. While the authors accurately outline illnesses such as post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and depression - using the subsections of

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incidence, aetiology, assessment, symptoms and prognosis - not all subsections are included under each mental illness. This makes the chapter appear disjointed and leaves me to question the formula used when determining what information to include and what to omit.

Mosby's Pocketbook of Mental Health is advertised as providing practical skills for managing people in crisis. While the authors have clearly attempted to deliver on their promise, they would be encouraged to lessen the scope of the pocketbook in favour of further development in this important area.

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