

and now' (p. 25). This sentiment has recently been powerfully endorsed by Richard Taylor (2007), a retired American psychologist who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease, in his book *Alzheimer's from the Inside Out*.

Chapter 2 deals with the political, economic and social issues surrounding dementia and we are reminded that, by 2050, 70 per cent of people with dementia will be living in developing countries. The difficulties of estimating the true cost of dementia are acknowledged in various studies, but opportunities for savings through more effective services are not. Chapter 3 considers whether caring for people with dementia is founded ultimately on utopian ideals and provides a comprehensive review of expectations against the realities of practice. Innes then examines dementia studies in their locational, cultural and social contexts with attention to family relationships and ethnicity. She reviews issues around stigma and stresses the importance of understanding the ethno-cultural values of communities as a starting point for developing carer-support groups. This chapter is important in helping us to understand why person-centred care is so difficult to implement. The complexities of ethnicity, stigma and subcultures in the workplace present major challenges. Chapter 5 has much to offer in terms of policy, practice and approaches to research. It demonstrates how the voices of people with dementia are only now beginning to be heard, but recognises that people with dementia are not just passive research participants but can be, and are, enabled to become active in deciding the direction of dementia research, for example by sitting on panels that make decisions about research funding. This synthesis of dementia studies from a social science perspective is a valuable academic resource. In particular, it highlights the need for future dementia studies to examine not only the micro level of the experiences of people with dementia but also the social systems and processes that continue to shape their lives.

## References

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CLIVE EVERS

doi:10.1017/S0144686X10000036

Ailsa Cook, *Dementia and Well-being: Possibilities and Challenges*, Dunedin Academic Press, Edinburgh, 2008, 90 pp., pbk £13.50, ISBN 13: 978 1 903765 76 0.

This is a terrific, timely and scholarly little book. It provides an accessible, succinct and sophisticated account of the potential for wellbeing in dementia and deserves more paper than it takes, for within its pages lies compelling evidence of

both the need and the means to promote the wellbeing of people with dementia. It is an indictment of the status quo and a manifesto on the potential for dementia care. There could not be a better time for the publication of this book, with countries tripping over themselves to produce national strategies. In England, for example, the national dementia strategy is boldly titled *Living Well with Dementia* (Department of Health 2009). As a field, dementia studies have been catapulted from an obsession with deficit and dysfunction to an embrace of the possibility of a life well lived with dementia. Despite all the activity at the level of governments, however, there has been relatively little academic scrutiny of the policies that are driving change in dementia care and none that does so from the perspective of people with dementia. The cynics amongst us might say this is because there have been few dementia-specific policies.

In this book, Cook challenges us to consider the potential of policy in the light of our understanding of the perspectives and experiences of people with dementia. She provides a scholarly overview of the history of policy in this area (or perhaps more accurately the lack of policy). Drawing with ease from a broad range of evidence from psychology, sociology and social policy, she coolly challenges us to consider whether current policy initiatives can and will promote wellbeing for people with dementia and their families. In these heady days of optimism, Cook provides a convincing analysis which prompts us to reconsider our assumptions. The book scrutinises four key areas of policy that have been identified by policy makers as fundamental to the wellbeing of people with dementia: health, independence, choice and control, and social inclusion. Each chapter begins with a definition of these key areas, then examines people's current experience, goes on to consider the challenges of improving people's experiences and, having set the context, scrutinises the potential of generic and dementia-specific policies making a difference.

These are not idle tales but forensically-constructed arguments; for example, in the chapter on health, Cook presents a compelling challenge to the limited usefulness to wellbeing of a contemporary policy that focuses on early diagnosis without an equal commitment to the provision of services and supports to those diagnosed. Each chapter provides a critical synthesis of existing literature. It is refreshing to see choice, control and social inclusion dealt with on a par with health and independence. Indeed the book is valuable reading just for the chapters on choice and control and social inclusion. This concise book is one of a series on policy and practice in health and social care. It will be of interest to all those working with older people and younger people with dementia, and of particular relevance to students of disability, ageing or dementia studies. I will encourage our students to read it.

## Reference

Department of Health 2009. *Living Well with Dementia: A National Dementia Strategy*. Department of Health, London.

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