

## Book Review

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*Mental Health in Ireland – The Complete Guide for Patients, Families and Health Care Professionals and Everyone Who Wants to Be Well*, Edited by Brendan Kelly. (435 pp.; ISSN 9780995792715). Liffey press, Dublin. 2017

B.K. set himself quite the ambitious task in addressing such a broad topic. To achieve this, he draws on his diverse range of academic interests, including law, history, epidemiology and mental health. This culminates in a highly informative overview of Irish mental health that is a useful resource to patients, professionals and families alike. While Professor Kelly is well accustomed to academic writing, this book demonstrates his ability to communicate important ideas in a less formal style.

This guide to mental health is divided into two sections. The first deals with specific illnesses; for each category of illness, the signs and symptoms, prevalence, aetiology and treatment are discussed. The book addresses the whole range of mental health difficulties from child and adolescent psychiatry to psychiatry of later life and from personality disorders to perinatal mental illness. These chapters take much of the basic content of diagnostic manuals and treatment guidelines and distils them into short chapters written in a narrative style. This first section ends with a very informative chapter on suicide and deliberate self-harm.

The second section addresses Ireland's response to mental health needs, including key topics such as mental health services, legislation, stigma, happiness and human rights. These chapters lay out much of Professor Kelly's published academic work in a manner accessible to a wider audience. As with all the information in this book, it is set in an Irish context.

Throughout the book there are helpful vignettes, providing typical examples of commonly encountered presentations and their management. Each chapter concludes with a highly informative list of references, websites and suggested reading.

One of the highlights of this book is its tone. Throughout, Professor Kelly seems acutely aware of how personally involved many of the readers will be, and of the strong emotions and opinions that can be evoked by the topic of mental health. This book provides clear facts, but does so in a measured way, without overstating the extent of current knowledge. It discusses the limitations of psychiatry and often

explores the reasons behind these limitations. It does much to tackle the stigma of mental illness and emphasizes treatment and recovery. Despite seeking to make this accessible to all, Professor Kelly still manages to communicate much of the important scientific literature on the topic.

This book will hopefully be a useful resource to a wide range of people. For those newly encountering the field of mental healthcare this book is a wonderfully balanced introduction to the topic. It will provide guidance for many families attempting to negotiate the complexities of living with mental illness and engaging with treatment and services. For example, families may find chapters 11 and 12 especially useful. Chapter 11 gives an informed and nuanced perspective on suicide, and provides practical steps for supporting someone experiencing suicidal ideation. Chapter 12 explains the structure of mental services in Ireland and highlights the available services and how to access them.

In contrast, some sections will be more relevant to healthcare professionals. Chapters 13 and 14 discuss legal aspects of mental health, these chapters (while still useful for families) may be particularly helpful for GPs and trainees trying to understand and apply the Irish legislation to individuals in their care. For those in the field of mental health it is an excellent example of how to communicate scientific research. The rigorous systematic thinking brings a clarity to many familiar topics.

I would highly recommend it for allied health professionals, GP trainees or other individuals coming new to the field of mental health. For doctors considering, or starting off in, psychiatry training this contains much of the information of a basic textbook, while being considerably more readable. The carefully measured tone and empathetic style may make it a particularly helpful text for trainees and students who have a penchant for remembering prevalence rates and chemical structures while struggling to communicate their knowledge.

This book succeeds in the mammoth task that it set out to address. It is a balanced and informative book covering the key principles of mental healthcare, carefully set in an Irish context.

### Conflicts of Interest

R.D. has no financial conflicts of interests, but Professor Kelly is his PhD Supervisor, there are no other conflicts of interests.

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