

Overcoming Alcohol Misuse – A 28 Day Guide

**Conor Farren. Published by Kite Books, Ireland
Paperback, 319 pages. ISBN; 9781842182130**

This book is very timely. Ireland is at low ebb economically and, not surprisingly, drug and alcohol problems are increasing at an alarming rate, according to all of the experts working in the healthcare field. Remarkably and tragically at the same time services are being curtailed.

Go into any bookshop and look for information on Alcohol, our number one social and health problem and you will be amazed to find a relative dearth of Irish literature on the subject. There are of course a few exceptions.

It is great to see a working consultant psychiatrist writing about this most important topic. I believe I am right in saying that this is the first specialty book on alcohol by any Irish psychiatrist since Dr JG Cooney launched the first edition of his seminal work, "Under the Weather" in 1991. That book became a best seller showing clearly that patients and family members are hungry for well-written, accurate information from specialists on this subject. The public services are 'hit and miss' at best in certain geographical areas and therefore the desperate need for more up to date information on services and accessible treatment is essential. This book certainly responds to that thirst (pun intended!).

In fact this is in effect three books in one. There are three main serial themes running throughout it; Descriptive case studies or vignettes in every chapter, lots of academic content including information for ordinary people, and the trials and tribulations of 'Joe', a married man, following through his 28 day detoxification and rehabilitation programme. There are 28 chapters in all and Joe's daily struggles are commented on at the end of each chapter. As the author points out, hence the title, as many rehab programmes are also 28 days long. Will Joe get better? – I guess we might have to wait for the sequel but this reviewer found himself interested by his progress and read all about Joe first. Demystifying treatment is very important as many people are afraid of this step and Dr Farren makes this aspect of treatment very real and personalised. A client of this reviewer said that he would be 'more willing to do a programme as a result of reading this book'.

The author uses many of his own sayings and phrases throughout the book displaying in particular his knowledge of dual diagnosis as it relates to alcohol problems. He also has highlighted truisms in every chapter, for example, "Sometimes the damage done by alcohol is irreversible". He is realistic about relapse rates. This is not a negative book however; rather it is honest and offers tangible hope for people with alcohol problems, "Effort triumphs over any other factor as a predictor of success". He emphasises the importance of persistence in efforts to recover. In another part of the book he says that research reveals that treatment retention equates to treatment success.

He addresses the many complicated dilemmas facing families and friends. There is real hope provided for families too in this tome, "Amazing as it sounds, most families where the alcohol misuser enters true recovery do very well".

Other chapters deal with the effects of alcohol on the body, questionnaires for self-assessment, causes, relapse, craving, mental health complications, medications, insight, self-help groups and much more besides. Dr Farren's knowledge of research, his long clinical experience and expertise, as well as his concern for patients are constantly evident throughout this book. There is something for everyone interested in this subject and answers to most questions about alcohol treatment.

This book is comprehensive. It has already been very well received in all quarters and I believe it will make a significant difference to the lives of many people seeking help.

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Changing Minds: Home not Hospital

**Marina Bowe, Patrick Devitt, Finian Kelly. TAF
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"Changing Minds: Home not Hospital" is an absorbing, important book published to mark 21 years of the Clondalkin Mental Health Service in Dublin. The authors describe the development of Ireland's first community psychiatry team, from its foundation in 1989, and through its consolidation and development over the following twenty-one years. The book is authored by three consultant psychiatrists who have worked in the Clondalkin Mental Health Service at various points throughout this time: Dr Marina Bowe, Dr Patrick Devitt and Dr Finian Kelly.

The Clondalkin Mental Health Service is fundamentally based on the idea that individuals with mental illness should, insofar as possible, be treated in their homes. Home treatment is promoted instead of admission to hospital because admission may ultimately prove lengthy, of dubious therapeutic value, and potentially distancing and disempowering for the individual. Treatment at home, when possible, permits the individual to remain in their family and community setting, and learn the work, leisure and relationship skills needed for recovery in the setting in which they live. In other words, home treatment is often more integrated, organic and meaningful for the individual affected by mental illness, and their family.

Against this backdrop, "Changing Minds: Home not Hospital" is a truly fascinating book, which paints a clear and compelling picture of the Clondalkin Mental Health Service from the time of its foundation, by Dr Ian Daly and the original team, right up to the present day. There are contributions from, and interviews with, a broad range of individuals, including Dr Ian Daly, Dr Dermot Walsh, John Saunders, Rosaleen Molloy, Victoria Somers, Dr Fiona Keogh, Dr Marina Bowe, Dr Patrick Devitt, Dr Finian Kelly, Dr Clare O'Toole and Michael