

McGlynn. There are also accounts of patients' experiences of the service, the research background to the home treatment approach, and information on day-to-day activities of the team.

It is a unique book for several reasons including the fact that it describes a psychiatric service unique in Ireland, and incorporates a diversity of inputs which makes it uniquely inclusive and insightful. What is most immediately striking, however, is that this book is one of the very few accounts of reform in Irish mental health services which conveys the feeling of the reform – the ideas that drove it, the way it worked out in real-life, and lessons learned over the past 21 years. On this basis, this book succeeds as an account of the foundation of the Clondalkin team, a valuable slice of Dublin's social history, and a rousing manifesto for further reform of Irish mental health services.

The book was supported by generous assistance from the Mental Health Commission, which is greatly to be thanked for its farsightedness. The foreword, written by John Saunders, director of SHINE, concludes that the book is essential reading for anyone involved in changing and reforming mental health services.

The book is, perhaps, especially relevant in an era when the vision outlined in "A Vision for Change" is to be implemented, and the enthusiasm which drove the Clondalkin Mental Health Service needs to be replicated in all mental health services around the country – and beyond.

Copies of "Changing Minds: Home not Hospital" are available from The Administrator, Clondalkin Mental Health Service, Unit 1A Village Centre, Orchard Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22. Telephone: 01 464 4231. Fax: 01 457 0588. Email: louise.deans@hse.ie.

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Unhinged: The trouble with psychiatry – a doctor's revelations about a profession in crisis

Daniel J. Carlat. Free Press: New York, 2010 (272pp). ISBN-10: 141659079X.

Psychiatrists have got to be the most criticised of all medical specialists. We regularly get dismissed as charlatans, coercive agents of the state, disease mongers and drug pushers. Many writers adopt polemical unbalanced anti-psychiatry positions while others can be blandly uncritical in their views. This recently published critique of the profession by Daniel J Carlat offers something different. Part confessional memoir and part

challenging exposé, it makes for compelling reading.

Daniel Carlat is a Harvard/Mass General trained psychiatrist who is now in a single-handed psychiatric office-based practice North of Boston. In recent years he has been publishing a widely followed on-line critique of psychiatric research and poorly evidence based practices, called the Carlat Psychiatry Report (<http://thecarlatreport.com>).

Carlat talks revealingly in this book about his own experiences as a psychopharmacology oriented psychiatrist and his work with the pharmaceutical industry until he decided that this was compromising his ethics. He describes in fascinating detail some of the indefensible practices of some of the biggest names in US psychiatry such as acting as hired guns, ghost writing of their research papers by pharmaceutical writers, having financial vested interests and so on. He also writes absorbingly about the muddled processes of arriving at the diagnostic categories for the various versions of the DSM.

Carlat's essential point is that most psychiatrists after the 1970s believed that neurobiology would deliver ever greater advances in the treatment of mental illnesses but that this has not happened as predicted. Along the way, he asserts that our profession have largely lost their psychotherapeutic skills and that now in order to cover up our therapeutic frailties, we hide behind inaccurate neurobiological babble as we tweak prescriptions this way and that and expand our reach further along the spectrum of normality, all the while being cheered on by big Pharma.

Carlat believes that psychiatric disorders are real and that psychoactive medications and ECT are very beneficial for them but thinks that biological treatments have not really advanced since the 1950s. He proposes that psychotherapy should reclaim its rightful place in every psychiatrist's arsenal. His most radical solution is one that few in the profession will agree with: he thinks that psychiatry and psychology should be amalgamated as a separate profession from medicine, rather like dentistry is.

Carlat's writing lacks the intellectual weight of Anthony Clare's great book about the state of psychiatry in the 1970s, *Psychiatry in Dissent*.¹ Most Irish psychiatrists will be struck by the amount of medication that Carlat prescribes for his patients and will not agree with his imputation that they spend most of their time just medicating. Carlat's tone is rather melodramatic at times and his descriptions over-simplified. His solutions for the profession also strike me as misguided and likely to emphasise the mind body division and increase stigma. Nonetheless this is a very readable, entertaining, well argued, often wise and relatively balanced exploration of some of the key questions facing psychiatry at the present time. I would recommend that anybody interested in psychiatry today reads it.

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Reference

1. Clare A. *Psychiatry in Dissent: Controversial Issues in Thought and Practice*. Tavistock Publications, 1976.