

Medicine, Mind and Meaning: A Psychiatrist's Guide to Treating the Body, Mind and Spirit

by Eve A. Wood, M.D. In One Press, Tucson, Ariz., 2004, 360 pages, \$22.00.

Psychiatry, like many other medical disciplines, has struggled to conceptualize and treat the integrated biological, psychological, and social dimensions of the human being. Care of the mental health patient over the past half century has been segregated into biological and psychological spheres that remain challenged to unite under a common model. Psychiatry has long endorsed the psychodynamic or psychoanalytical orientation to patient assessment and treatment. It has been difficult for some psychiatrists to reconcile this orientation to the use of medications and the biological receptor targeting of symptoms. We often place this polarized approach on a type-cast mold of DSM-IV symptomatology that we empathetically call "the patient."

Medicine, Mind and Meaning offers psychiatry a new paradigm in mental health practice. Eve A. Wood, M.D., Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Arizona Program in Integrative Medicine, introduces a systematic treatment approach to common mental illness that is comprehensive and patient centered. Dr. Wood's approach appears to bring the remnants of George Engel's biopsychosocial model to the everyday common experience where mind, medicine, and meaning converge. The purpose of this book moves far beyond symptom reduction. The general theme of this book is *healing*, a concept that I believe is too infrequent in today's aesthetic psychiatry.

This book targets both the practitioner and the patient alike. It is well written in a format that provides easy digestion for the patient, yet it is not oversimplified for mental health providers. Physicians, nurses, case managers, and therapists would benefit from all of the tools that *Medicine, Mind and Meaning* provides to facilitate patient care. Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D., writes a fitting foreword to herald the well-paced 11 sections of this book. At times, this work reads like a narrative; at other times, it appears to be a therapeutic manual.

Dr. Wood opens the book with an introduction of the "three-legged stool," supported by the "body," "mindset," and "spirit." Unlike traditional mental health formulations of patients, this integrative approach to healing encompasses the biology of illness and finally reaches to the varied transcendental purpose of human existence. This complex yet natural formulation is exhibited in the section "Gillie's Story." Dr. Wood does a fine job of explaining the "three legs" in a narrative format of her patient Gillie's remarkable and challenging struggle with dissociative identity disorder. In this section, as with the rest of the book, the author demonstrates the successes and setbacks in the humanistic exchange between individuals that we call psychiatric treatment. Dr. Wood also remains very candid about wrestling with boundary issues that confront all mental health providers.

As you read further, this book begins the transition from narrative to manual. Each section goes in depth to illustrate the principles of assessment and treatment of the "three-legged stool." Readers begin the progression with a narrative case and conclude with "take home points" to further illustrate key concepts. Interestingly, as the book steps forward, the author's target audience of patient and practitioner becomes blurred. I believe that this blurring may be intentional, done to fully engage those on both sides of the treatment dyad. Dr. Wood artfully writes the methods for assessment and intervention such

that all members of the treatment team can participate actively in the integrative model.

The discussion of the "body" leg uses case stories involving obsessive-compulsive disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to illustrate the stepwise procedures for assessments and intervention. Dr. Wood stresses the importance of making the appropriate diagnosis and models the way to further incorporate patients in the diagnostic process. The author makes the use of evidence-based interventions, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, and customized practical everyday interventions to initiate the patient's progression toward healing.

The "mind" leg incorporates the understanding of mindset, attitudes, and family-of-origin issues. Dr. Wood explores the various psychodynamic concepts as well as childhood experiences and their impact on the patient's general cognitive schema and current relationships. These sections are riddled with treatment pearls that help prime exploration of the patient's true self or "voice." Self-exploration techniques, motivation exercises, and other literary resources are present to help nurture the path toward healing.

According to the text, the "spirit" leg involves the meaning and purpose of the healing journey. While Dr. Wood clearly states that she does not endorse any particular religion or faith, she does advance the spirit leg as "the cornerstone of mental and physical health." The author uses significant self-disclosure and patient cases to illustrate how to carefully tread these uncharted areas to navigate patients toward involving their own spiritual self at their own pace. The emergence of "Chris," "Eric," "Mary," and "Lynne" helps the author articulate hope, meaning, and spiritual connection. Dr. Wood then brings the body, mind, and spirit together in a way that instills confidence in the practitioner in this approach. Dr. Wood's orchestration of this triad also empowers patients to become the steward of their own treatment.

In the final section, "In the Words of My Patients," Dr. Wood gives the reader access to her private patients' reflections about their suffering and healing. This access allows patients reading this book to discover possible similarities between the patient accounts and their own experience. Furthermore, these reflections of the different journeys to healing give some credence to the "three-legged stool" approach that Dr. Wood endorses. These portraits of triumph provide mental health providers some renewed hope of helping troubled patients heal.

The book finishes with appendixes describing various psychiatric illness, including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, ADHD, eating disorders, and addictive illness. Each appendix includes a discussion of how the illness is diagnosed using DSM-IV diagnostic criteria, a listing of medications and treatment options, and contact information for various support groups and organizations.

For those readers looking for something more to offer our patients beyond the latest psychotropic treatment guideline or psychotherapy approach du jour, *Medicine, Mind and Meaning* is a promising and tangible option. As we observe the treatment style of Dr. Wood through her various cases, we see a psychoeducator, a psychopharmacologist, and a life-skills coach. These are all skills that all clinicians could utilize at different times to help their patients. The book is ideal for patients and families who desire to heal and for providers who hope to facilitate that healing.

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