

# BOOK REVIEW

## ***An Anthology of Psychiatric Ethics***

By Sidney Bloch, Stephen Green, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006 (Soft cover)

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This is an excellent book. When I received the book to review, I found myself quickly referring to its content when faced with the increasingly difficult ethical consults in my daily work. This fact in itself led me to compare it to my other mental health ethics reference texts. *An Anthology of Psychiatric Ethics* is now my preferred reference text when providing education on ethics to mental health staff.

The text is divided into nine core sections such as Diagnosis and Confidentiality, etc. Each section is introduced and the reader is provided with the basic premises which generally guide the topic and following essays. A bibliography is included at the end of each introduction which provides the reader, and particularly students, more direction to research the topic in detail. This is a very valuable teaching tool for those of us in busy practice environments.

The text begins with a basic introduction to the standard bioethics theories, i.e. principles, utilitarian, etc. Interestingly and refreshingly, Edward Pellegrino's essay on the "Virtuous Physician, and the Ethics of Medicine" as well as Alisa Carse's essay: "The Voice of Care" are included in the theoretical section. In my view, psychiatric ethics tends to brush aside such notions as virtue and care in favour of law and principles. However, it is virtue and care that our patients frequently find lacking in psychiatric treatment.

I also enjoyed re-reading the more classic and controversial essays that have informed and influenced the direction of mental health ethics and treatment. Such essays as Freud's "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912), Rosenhan's "On Being Sane in Unsane Places" (1973) and, of course, the notable Thomas Szasz's "The Myth of Mental Illness" continue to be relevant in today's increasingly complex field of mental health. Including these works in an anthology on psychiatric ethics indicates a broad moral understanding of mental health by the editors.

Unfortunately, the anthology is not without its shortcomings. I would have preferred to see more discussion on a number of current ethical issues which seem to be increasingly important in the field. Firstly, although there are one or two essays on dementia, the text generally lacks a thorough examination of psychogeriatrics. As this population is greatly increasing, the ethics of issues related to living at risk with mild dementia would have been appreciated. Secondly, the area of children's mental health is only briefly attended to by the editors. Thirdly, the related areas of addiction, harm reduction, homelessness and the complex psychiatric patient

are basically ignored. Generally, these are the populations which seem to cause the most intense moral distress among caregivers, family members and professionals.

Lastly, a section on consumer/patient views and opinions could have been included... "Whose life is it anyway?"

Nonetheless, even with these shortcomings, I would recommend the text as an excellent reference and introductory text to the topic of mental health ethics.

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