

Book Review

Michael H. Ebert, M.D., Editor

Treatment Planning for Psychotherapists

by Richard B. Makover, M.D. Washington, D.C. American Psychiatric Press, 1996, 239 pages, \$35.00.

The basic premise of this text is that "appropriate treatment plans promote good patient-therapist relationships that contribute to successful, effective therapy outcomes." While most institutional settings require clinicians to write treatment plans, they are frequently written more for the record and regulatory requirements than for the patient. With this in mind, Makover attempts to guide the practitioner "to develop useful, relevant and individualized plans, which can assist the clinical work and satisfy outside reviewers as well."

The author pursues this goal by organizing the text around his 4-level treatment plan (employed after a clinician has done an appropriate assessment and case formulation) consisting of an aim, goals, strategy, and tactics. Simply put, the aim is the most desired treatment outcome (e.g., euthymia in a depressed patient), while goals are the specific components of the treatment aim (e.g., with a depressed patient they may include a reduction in symptoms, greater involvement with family and community, and minimizing recurrence risks). Strategy refers to the major treatment modality (e.g., behavior therapy) for helping the patient achieve goals, while tactics are the technical elements (e.g., desensitization) of the strategy that will be employed. The treatment plan needs to be monitored, and if necessary revised, depending on the patient's progress or new information. The author uses extensive case examples and graphic displays to facilitate the reader's conceptual understanding of his framework. The volume is intended for the practitioner "who provides psychotherapy in a private office setting."

Makover should be commended for his efforts in presenting an in-depth articulation of this complex and important part of therapy. For example, when therapy stalls, it may be a consequence of inadequate treatment planning, the lack of clear agreement about aims between the treatment partners, and/or the patient's lack of understanding of how the treatment strategy or tactics employed by the therapist are going to prove useful. The author is at his strongest when he provides the benefit of his experience. His advice is extraordinarily solid and helpful. Other positive features of this book include the author's open view toward diverse theories and therapeutic strategies, his enlightening insights into treatment planning issues, and the helpful case illustrations.

The book's shortcomings are generally minor, including the redundancy of material and, depending on the needs of the specific reader, the overuse of figures (approximately 30 half- or full-page figures in a 200-plus page book). After the first few diagrams, the rest provide little new information. The reference sections, although not exhaustive, are representative of major contributions to the area. This reviewer would have liked to have seen a chapter dealing with the scientific aspects of treatment planning. The content could have included issues such as an operational definition of treatment planning, testing the validity and reliability of formulations (e.g., do independent evaluators agree as to whether the patient data lead to the same formulation?), objective data demonstrating the efficacy of the interventions (strategy and tactics) based upon the treatment goals, and other relevant issues.

I would recommend this book strongly to psychotherapy supervisors and lecturers, as well as clinical trainees in the various mental health fields. The more experienced therapist will likely benefit from reading the text by gaining a new perspective on treatment planning including a greater enthusiasm for the activity. This might also lead to greater competence and confidence in the complex and difficult work of psychotherapy.

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