

review has led one to examine one's own standpoint, as illustrated above and in this respect; the book has served out its purpose and succeeded with flying colours.

ADRIAN JONES *PhD RN*
Nurse Consultant & Visiting Reader in
Psychiatric Nursing
Glyndwr University
North Wales NHS Trust
Wrexham Maelor Hospital
Wrexham
UK
E-mail: ADRIAN.JONES3@wales.nhs.uk

Mental Health across Cultures – A Practical Guide for Health Professionals

Jill Benson & Jill Thistlethwaite
Radcliffe Publishing, Oxford
 2009, 208 pages, £22.95 (PB)
 ISBN-13: 978-1846192197

This was an enjoyable book to read. It is somewhat medico-centric (not surprisingly as both authors trained as general practitioners) and more directly relevant to workers in Australia (with vignettes mostly relating to working with Aboriginal Australians or migrants to Australia) despite aspirations towards universalism. It is part guidebook and academic text but meanders into social commentary and observation. This makes it engaging to read even if it lapses into pop psychology or moralizing in places.

The book is well organized and laid out into three sections. The first section (two chapters) addresses what they call a model for working in mental health across cultures. In essence, this is an annotated list of principles or considerations for holistic primary health care. A 'cultural awareness tool' is presented, which is a set of questions about

the person's understanding about their 'illness'. This might attenuate the cultural arrogance of a purely diagnostically orientated consultation (although it falls short of the humility and openness of a 'tidal model' assessment). The authors alert the reader to consider the person's connections to their community, engaging cultural mentors and so forth.

The second section addresses psychotherapy across cultures with chapters on general principles, cognitive behavioural therapy, narrative therapy and resilience and spirituality. Here we are reminded (p. 60) that this book is not about addressing serious mental illness or psychosis. These brief and selective surveys of the literature and examples of practices provide just a taster to these areas. The final section on cultural mental health in context covers a wider terrain with chapters on a mixed bag of topics, including health professionals (doctors) from diverse backgrounds, cross-cultural consultations and psychiatry and psychopharmacology across cultures.

In this text, institutional racism, intergenerational trauma and the devastation wreaked on the mental health, identity and well-being of aboriginal communities as the direct consequence of endemic racism, failed social policies and rampant substance misuse is barely touched upon. Sometimes too the descriptions of 'traditional cultures' errs towards romanticism. These criticisms aside, this is a book that many front-line primary care and mental health workers will glean something useful from, particularly those who choose to work in Australia.

RICHARD LAKEMAN *BN BA Hons PG Di*
(Psychotherapy)
Lecturer
School of Nursing
Dublin City University
Dublin
Ireland
E-mail: richard.lakeman@dcu.ie