

Companion to Primary Care Mental Health

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Mental health is considered as one of the essential conceptual building blocks used for defining the state of health by the World Health Organization. The available medical literature cited in the work reviewed here suggests that nearly 20% of primary care patients have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, while 50% of primary care visits are for stress and its complications. Although the understanding of these conditions has increased over the past century, the specific resources to treat mental illness remain insufficient and inappropriately distributed in many parts of the world. Accordingly, we see increasing numbers of these conditions being presented and managed by family doctors and general practitioners all over the world. The authors of this book have sought to bridge the 'science to service gap' existing among these professionals on mental health. This book will prove an invaluable resource for the planning and implementation of interventions in the care of the mentally ill in the family practice and primary care setting.

The four sections and 33 topics of the book are well chosen and cover the important and essential areas that need to be addressed in primary care mental health. The editors have distilled a vast amount of medical literature, as well as their own clinical experiences in every-day family practice, into an operational manual with easy to follow diagrams, examples and case summaries. It will take the reader on a journey through the factors that contribute to mental health concerns and interventions that can be used in its management in the primary care setting. Efforts to change the views of clinicians, to consider the influences on

mental health of the broader 'social determinants' such as the environment in which the people live and work, the social and religious settings, in addition to the presenting symptoms are highlighted and stressed from the beginning of the book. The initial chapters describe the concepts, determinants of mental health, advocacy and overcoming stigma, spirituality and ethics for primary care mental health. These chapters are presented in a manner that seeks to enlighten the reader and bring about a change in their practices necessary for success in primary care mental health.

As Professor Richard Roberts expresses in the foreword, the practitioners of primary care must know and do more, they need the best science and practice to apply the best treatment, so that they can be comprehensive in their approach in caring for patients with mental health care needs. I highly recommend this book because the authors have succeeded in compiling vast amounts of information and knowledge into a single work of reference. This book guides health professionals, not only on the treatment, but also on the practical aspects of integrating management of the patient holistically, in any primary health care setting.

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