

Community Care Works: Learning from the Torbay experience.

By Virginia Beardshaw and Edith Morgan. 1990.
Pp. 151. £9.50. MIND Mail Order Service, 4th
Floor, 24–32 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD

In 1989, the Community Mental Health Service in Torbay was subjected to a great deal of adverse media comment which was seized upon by those who opposed the closure of large mental hospitals, although a subsequent independent enquiry essentially vindicated the Service. This excellent little book, published by MIND, helps to put the record straight. It describes an evaluation of the Torbay Community Mental Health Service, carried out in 1988, with a postscript which brings the story fully up to date.

Exminster Hospital was closed in 1987. A community mental health service was developed in its place. The initial emphasis was on setting up community mental health centres which ran on the now familiar principles of providing a local, easily accessible, normalised service from a multidisciplinary team operating on the keyworker principle. There is back-up from an acute in-patient unit and other facilities include local day centres, hostel and core and cluster accommodation and a unit for patients with challenging behaviour. Collaboration with social services, voluntary agencies and general practitioners, and user involvement in both decisions on their own treatment and service planning, were encouraged. A survey of service users revealed a high level of satisfaction with the new service relative to the previous institutionally based model. There was emphasis on an educational programme for staff moving from institutional to community settings, a need which is often neglected.

Although the authors are clearly enthusiasts for the community based model of mental health care, they are realistic about some of the problems in Torbay. There is particular concern about the lack of long-term NHS or local authority beds for the elderly. Most long-term care is provided by the private sector where standards vary. There was concern that the multidisciplinary keyworker system might result in too narrow a perspective being taken on patient care, though it must be said that the same problem can occur in traditional medically dominated services. The initial model of basing all psychiatrists in community mental health centres was later modified by basing some consultants in the acute psychiatric unit with outreach to the community mental health centres. Co-operation between Health

and Social Services has been less than optimal. These and the other problems described will be familiar to those involved in the development of community mental health services.

This book is essential reading for all those who are involved in the closure of the large mental institutions and the development of progressive community based mental health services. It provides a model of good community mental health care while also illustrating some of the practical problems of developing such a service.

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Psycho-oncology Letters is an official organ of the Hellenic Society of Psychosocial Oncology. It is published quarterly in collaboration with the European Working Group for Psychosomatic Cancer Research.

It presents reports on studies of psychosomatic aspects on two-thirds of each page. Two studies are described: 'The link between life events, personality traits and cultural influences and the development of malignant neoplasia in women with advanced gynaecological or breast cancer' and a comparative study of personality traits among lung cancer patients, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients and healthy controls.

It also reports abstracts of interesting papers.

In the remaining third of each page it reports on the activities of the Institute of Advanced Biobehavioural Sciences, their planned research projects, future activities and books of interest.

Unfortunately, the data are presented uncritically. They have clearly not been subject to a peer review process or careful statistical review. Consequently, statements are made about the relationship between mind and cancer which cannot be sustained. Such 'freebies' as this letter surely do a disservice to this field of research in the end. There is no substitute for publication within accepted mainstream journals.

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