BOOK REVIEWS


This book provides a summary of the interventions that have been found to be useful when attempting to rehabilitate people with long-term mental health conditions back into the work force. It draws on the considerable amounts of research that have now been undertaken and also provides guidance about planning services.

The editors include the director and the project development manager of the employment programme at the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health and the Professor of Mental Health at Anglia Polytechnic University. All three have been involved in several major programmes of research and policy development aimed at improving mental health users’ chances of job retention and finding work. The book describes itself as being aimed mainly at clinicians but also at employment and policy advisors.

The topics covered include discussion about the improved prognosis of patients with schizophrenia (following publication of two major 30-year studies), the goal of the majority of patients to have real paid work, what works and what does not work in achieving this goal and descriptions of some UK studies.

The structure and style of the book vary significantly as is often the case with multiple author publications. Unusually, many of the contributors to this book have been mental health service users themselves. Although the personal accounts are interesting, the lack of editing makes the book cumbersome in places. Fortunately, it is countered by the very readable descriptions of the research projects that have been carried out. There are multiple references which would also be of use to those who require further reading in this field.

Mental health professionals are repeatedly criticized by the authors for discouraging employment in those with long-term mental health conditions and for having poor knowledge of the benefits system. In light of this it would have been interesting to have had the clinicians’ perceptions of the problems they face supporting patient’s employment. Another obvious negative is the apparent absence of any mention of the role of the occupational health professional in this book which seems an omission given our involvement in this area for the majority of larger employers in the United Kingdom.

In summary, if one needs an introductory guide to vocational rehabilitation in the United Kingdom for people with long-term mental health conditions this is probably a good place to start but do not expect a comprehensive text on the subject.

Rating

☆☆☆ (Borrow from the library.)

K. Cryer