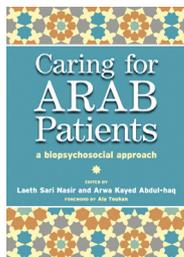


Caring for Arab Patients A Biopsychosocial Approach



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رعاية المرضى العرب أسلوب أحيائي نفسي اجتماعي

المحررون: ليث ناصر، أروى عبد الحق

DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE ARE IN THE AGE of globalisation, it is apparent that health, distress, illness and disability are still influenced and shaped by local and socio-cultural forces. This is not a new idea as it owes its origin to the father of medicine, Hippocrates, and it is borne out by a myriad of empirical research studies in more recent years. Despite this, one of the lingering fallacies of modern health care is a blind adherence to the biomedical model which myopically assumes that the repertoires of human behaviour and its counterpart, ill-health, have a direct and simple association with the functions or dysfunctions of our body. Heralding a new perspective from the Arab part of the world, such prevailing dogma is about to be dented with this volume focusing on healthcare for the Arab population. The volume extrapolates from available literature to shed light on the importance of psychosocial variables in the matrix of health care and diseases.

The conceptual outlook of the book is grounded within a biopsychosocial model that emphasises the interplay between biological and social milieus as central to the predisposition, onset, course and out-

come of most disorders. The volume aims to provide a practical and patient-centred guide to assist health professionals in dispensing better clinical care to Arab patients. The book is divided into 17 chapters. The editors of this volume selected authors from the region with the most credentials in the field of caring for the Arab patients. Thus, the message from this volume comes from the people in the field rather than from arm-chair researchers living far from the region.

The themes covered in this volume are diverse including health education, palliative care and factors leading to care-seeking as well as the culturally specific odium of distress. Within biopsychosocial perspectives, the volume also tackles how to care for Arab patients with specific disorders including anxiety, depression, somatoform disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, eating disorders and substance abuse. If you feel these are 'Cinderella' topics or you are simply a 'hard science type', then you will also find in this volume topics like genetic disorders highlighting the molecular side of such endeavours in the Arab world.

If one expects to be enlightened in this volume on background social-cultural teachings for the care of

Arab patients, then one would be disappointed. Far from presenting the literature relevant to the region, the coverage is nothing more than a good literature review deriving largely from non-Arab population and narrated in a Euro-American vernacular. Most of the literature for this comes from that accessible through PubMed. Work published in Arabic or local journals is ostensibly absent. Reading individual chapters, no coherent theme emerged germane to the biopsychosocial model. Most of the chapters simply narrated trends in the Western population with no explicit implications for the situation in the Arab part of the world. The coverage is basically a typical textbook presentation of common disorders and other issues that authors vaguely deemed to have biopsychosocial trajectories. Mundane themes for patients care from a biopsychosocial perspective such as clinical communications and the doctor-patient relationship receive scant attention. This volume also perpetuates the myth that there is a prototype Arab character. Empirical evidence suggests that Arab countries are heterogeneous, characterised by a mosaic of sub-cultural diversities.

Is this then one of those books which someone like Edward Said would perceive to present a veneer of 'orientalism' in this case gowned with medical sci-

ence? The volume is a bold attempt to chart some directions in biopsychosocial research in a region where such quest has largely remained dormant. The volume hinges on the assumption that health is inescapably social, a view largely ignored in research coming from the Arab world. The volume should be on the shelves of everyone who is directly or otherwise involved in all matters related to patient care, healthcare management, health sciences research, and, for that matter, policy makers. In the era of 'Arab bashing', the strength of this volume is that it teach us that ailing Arab persons should receive the same level of compassion and care from their doctors as their counterparts elsewhere.

REVIEWER

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