

Behavior and Medicine (4th edition)

Editors: Danny Wedding, Margaret L Stuber

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Not similar to most of the textbooks, *Behavior & Medicine* employed a different approach in discussing topics in behavioural science in medicine. It was written according to recommendations by the Institute of Medicine on the teaching of behavioural and social science. Instead of dividing the chapters according to disease entities or psychological theories, the book was divided into 6 main areas: mind-body interactions in health and disease, patient behaviour, physician's role and behaviour, physician-patient interaction, social and cultural issues in health care, and health policy and economics.

The area on mind-body interactions in health and disease was more 'traditional' in its approach. Starting from a chapter describing neuroanatomy, memory and emotion, it went on to describe the role of family and friends in health. This was followed by chapters on the behavioural and psychological development in childhood and adolescence, adulthood, ageing, and death. It concluded with a chapter on chronic pain, with descriptions on the neurophysiology, psychology, and behavioural management on this common health problem. The part on patient behaviour first described the relationship between stress and different physical disorders. It was followed by a discussion on addiction disorders, methods to facilitate health changes, psychodynamic approaches to human behaviour, and also human sexuality. The part dealing with the physician's role and behaviour prepared readers (especially the medical students) to handle problems with both academic and non-academic aspects, and to recognise their role in modern multidisciplinary health care systems. The part on physician-patient interaction focused on the assessment and treatment of pathology, the doctor-patient relationship and communication. It also covered

the management of difficult patients, as well as the role of humanities in the practice of modern medicine. In the section about the social and culture issues in health care, it described the need to recognise the importance of social and culture issues in clinical practice, the role of complementary and alternative medicine in the modern western medicine system, and the impact of social inequalities in the health care system. Health policy and economics was discussed in the last part of this book, with particular reference to the current situation in the United States.

In comparison to the textbooks on behavioural and social science in my student years, this book impressed me with its more 'real-life' approach to the topics. There were also plenty of case examples in the text, illustrating how to apply the different behavioural and social science principles in epidemiology, in identifying disease aetiology, and in the management of difficult clinical scenarios. The chapters on "communicating with patients" and "managing difficult patients" seemed particularly useful, not only to the students and junior doctors but also as a reminder to experienced psychiatrists working in busy clinic settings. On the other hand, the attempt to cover such a wide area in different topics in this book meant that not all the chapters were written from the basics. It might therefore have been preferable for the junior medical students to have some 'more traditional' textbooks cited for their reference.

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