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Book Reviews


Social Work on the Line discusses the justification and premise for social work ethics. It captures the need for codifying ethics and enunciates a paradigm for making ethical judgements. Furthermore, it sets precedences for ethical judgements and evaluation. Finally, the author calls for broadcasts of ethics to social work professionals and students.

It is the author’s assertion that, privatisation of services promotes profitable self-interest over community service, thus diminishing the traditional public and agency-sanctioned practice safeguards. Modern technology, on the other hand, alters levels and standards of professional services, putting the application of values to severe test, hence compounding ethical problems. The need to regulate and control the behaviour of social workers therefore becomes imperative.

Dr Levy implores social work organisations to codify ethics to which their members subscribe, and publicly declare the ethics to which their members are said to be collectively committed and what these ethics may expect of them, thus engendering professionalism. The author’s assertions emit signals to social work associations seeking to uphold credible professional status, effective service and practice; to develop codes of ethics, to act as benchmarks for the enforcement of social work ethics and adjudication of any ethical conduct complaints.

Social Work on the Line proposes a model for ethical decision-making and evaluation demonstrated in twenty-four vignettes, representing occurrences common to social work practice. The package serves as a handy manual for both social work practice and practice control procedures. The vignettes clearly enunciate dilemmas in practice affecting ethical conduct, and are invaluable as a framework for social work practice, supervision, administration, community work, and education.

This book provides an important guide to both social work educators and practitioners and also provides essential literature for social work students.

Reviewed by Ilelen Tapfumaneyi (MSW), President National Association of Social Workers, Zimbabwe, Army Social Services, P Bag 7720, Causeway.

This book has been published at a time when addiction to substances is becoming a major socio-economic problem in many countries. Many professionals find themselves at a loss in terms of how to help people who are addicts. 

Addiction Intervention includes contributions from experts in various fields, focussing on different aspects of alcohol and drug abuse. In Chapter 1, the author describes how the family can be involved in the treatment of an addicted person. He is very pragmatic, however, as he also outlines the limitations of family intervention. In addition, he suggests alternative strategies which can also be useful for the medical, legal employee assistance programmes and professional communities.

The medical strategy is examined in Chapter 2. A significant percentage of addicts will need medical care at some point in their lives, either for their addiction or for other medical conditions. How a medical practitioner may effectively intervene is proposed. The fact that the physician should be aware of the resources system in a given community, such as self-help groups, is highlighted.

Addiction can be viewed from a mental health perspective. Chapter 3 explains how intervention can be carried out - of importance, are the key elements in what the author calls the 'Persuasion Stage'. These elements are considered to be essential when interviewing a mentally ill person.

The fact that people with alcohol/drug problems are also found at the workplace is of interest. Chapter 4 focusses on the employee assistance programme strategy and outlines the roles that key players, such as supervisors and unions, can play in the treatment of these employees. A clear step-by-step approach for counselling is also given. In addition, Chapter 5 looks at how professional associations can help their own members who have addiction problems. This chapter is crucial because it clearly spells out that professionals are just like anyone else and can develop this problem too. Peer assistance is viewed as an important component in this intervention programme.

It is widely accepted that adolescents tend to be more at risk than other categories of people. This book would be incomplete if it did not address the issue of adolescent intervention strategies, which are given in Chapter 6.

A summary of various family therapy intervention models are given in Chapter 7. The author notes that this chapter is about: “a tool, another approach to treatment based on an integration of Vernon Johnson’s Intervention model, Task Centred Clinical Social Work and structural systems engagement”. It highlights the importance of involving the family in the intervention process.
Since people with addiction problems are likely to come face to face with the law, a legal strategy is presented in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9, the author shares with the reader the services offered in a “one stop re-employment social services centre”, suggesting the use of C.A.R.E, “a four step intervention strategy”, which is said to be informal.

This book provides much needed guidance on how to intervene, using different strategies depending on the professional background of a person. It is user-friendly and offers practical guidelines on how to help addicts. Academics, researchers, practitioners and students should be able to use the information provided and even try out some of the strategies in a variety of settings.

Perpetua Gumbo, Lecturer, School of Social Work, Harare, Zimbabwe.