

## Review

Guy Harrison, ed., *Psycho-spiritual Care in Health Care Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017, 208 pp. (Pbk). ISBN: 978-1-78592-039-4, £18.99.

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Guy Harrison is the Head of Spiritual and Pastoral Care at Oxford NHS Foundation Trust and the Director of the Oxford Centre for Spirituality and Wellbeing. This well written and timely book represents aspects of his doctoral research and the resulting symposium, held in 2016, which developed from his doctoral studies.

The book is divided into two parts: Part 1 is headed “The Development of Psycho-spiritual Care: Research and Practice” and is a look at aspects of the authors own research into the “chasm” (p. 13) between theory and practice in this area. The first chapter gives a useful overview of the historical development of healthcare chaplaincy and its development into “spiritual care professionals” (p. 22). He usefully seeks harder definitions of loose terms like “therapeutic spiritual counselling” and “psychologically informed knowledge” where are used in chaplaincy job descriptions. The reflections on a literature review and major world faiths gives a brief, yet helpful grounding in this area in comparatively few words: many chaplaincy teams could benefit from a study of this chapter on a team day.

Further chapters flesh out and define his autoethnographic approach. This was a new approach to me, but I found myself warming to a method that did not seek to see the researcher as a disembodied expert. I liked how this method produced research that was grounded in personal experience: as a chaplain, I live in a world of stories and differing narratives and this way of looking at things is true to it. Central to these chapters is the idea of liminality: as chaplains we work and have our being in this space and we are both within and outside the structures of our organizations. There are heartrending aggregated stories of patient experience and how a chaplain responds to them as well as stories about our involvement in the wider

healthcare management system: especially helpful here were the uncertainty on how to proceed and the feelings of vulnerability that engenders. I found myself longing that I had been able to read something like this when I began in healthcare chaplaincy.

Part 2 is the work of a symposium of healthcare professionals who are responding to the author's work. I like how these voices are bought into the conversation: their agreement and (gentle) dissension is helpfully outlined and the resultant conversation helps to open up a potentially illuminating dialogue in the reader's mind. There are helpful insights here from (in turn) a Professor in counselling, a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a music therapist, a director of nursing and a chaplain. The author's own approach of reflective practice and self-questioning encourages a similar approach in his contributors and the book is all the better for it. The inclusion of responses by other writers in several chapters was useful in helping to gain a greater understanding of the area being discussed.

I review books for this journal as part of my professional development: I have only been in mental health care chaplaincy since March 2015. This is the kind of book that I wish had been placed in my hands in my first six months: I found the combination of analysis of personal experience grounded in reflective practice coupled with academic research to be both compelling and helpful for my own development. If I were to use the language of my own faith tradition, this book confirmed God's call into chaplaincy for me.

There is so much here that is insightful to the area of psycho-spiritual care, both for chaplains and all who work in healthcare and are seeking a more holistic, person-centred approach. The one page introduction should be required reading for all who work in healthcare: it features four quotes from patients on the need for their spirituality to be included in a holistic approach to their treatment and care. Their plaintive voices as to how this has not been the case will stay with me long after my memory of the rest of this book has diminished.

The useful combination of personal research and the voices of others from different healthcare disciplines I found to be extremely helpful. I liked this aspect and also the fact that non-religious spiritual care was included as part of the discourse. I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to any chaplain at whatever stage of their professional development and anyone who sees a gap between the theory and practice of spiritual care in health related care "and who seeks to bring psychologically informed spiritual care in the form of psycho-spiritual care into dialogue with both psycho-social care and medical care" (p. 12).