

## Book review

# Excellence in dementia care: research into practice

*Edited by Murna Downs and Barbara Bowers  
Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill, Open University Press,  
2008, pp. 531  
ISBN 978 0 33 5223756*

As clearly expressed by the title, this book investigates care for dementia considering all aspects of these pathologies, whilst attempting to provide the reader with the very latest information, often stemming from recently published research. The reading of this book forges a direct link with integrated care insofar as these pathologies are not approached from an exclusively biological, psychological, environmental or social angle but include all of these dimensions at once. At the end of the book the reader will find a section dedicated to the societal aspect of dementia, this section is particularly important for a researcher in integrated care. Dementia can indeed be taken as a model of a disease for which the customary fragmentation of support and care systems is particularly deleterious for persons with multiple needs and requiring skills belonging to multiple circles.

The book is divided into four sections each including seven chapters enabling the rapid identification of the sections that are most important to the reader. The first part entitled 'Principles and perspectives' deals with demographic issues and the experience born by persons suffering from these pathologies. The second part entitled 'Knowledge and skills for supporting people with dementia' deals with elements involving the evaluation of peoples' situations taking into account all aspects of life. The third part entitled 'Journeys through dementia care' describes, step by step, the challenges raised by this disease and to be met by people who wish to provide help. This layout, which does not approach the symptoms in an isolated manner but takes into account passing time, required the authors to adopt a transverse needs analysis often stretching beyond the scope of their initial professional background. The final part entitled 'Embedding excellence in dementia care' is no doubt the most interesting for the integrated care researcher who will find thoughts

on the involvement of patients in the implementation of public policies, thoughts on educating care providers as an important part in the quality of care, and a reflection also on the importance of leadership in the necessary reorganization of care required by demographic development.

Finally, two chapters at the end of the book adopt a more direct approach to the daily challenges faced by integrated care researchers. The first deals with the permanent imbalance of fund attribution to research rather than to support care with a fragmented approach to reflection and based on a relevant historical analysis shedding light on the history of care organisation for people suffering from dementia in the USA, whilst particularly highlighting the split between psychiatry and other medical specialties. The final chapter looks at the more recent history of public policies established for people suffering from dementia in England. This chapter quite clearly underlines the challenges of integration. However, it remains unclear if the methodology and critical analysis regarding the possibilities or difficulties to be expected from an application within a different national environment will be sufficient (as the international aspects remain too general).

The book is easy to handle, provides fast access to a collection of knowledge that is usually difficult to find in a single volume, as fundamentally marked by a multi-disciplinarian approach and by certain cross-disciplinarian points (in particular in the third section). The authors are often broadly acknowledged within their field and hold highly varying positions (professionals, representatives of affected persons, researchers and lecturers). Professionals and researchers/lecturers come from the fields of medicine, psychology, psychiatry, sociology and social work. It is no doubt a shame that the environmental aspect of dementia has not been broached. This omission is pointed out in the book's introduction but still leaves a feeling of incompleteness. Moreover, integration in its political or intentional dimension is only approached from the angle of challenges without documenting the impacts of endeavours possibly carried out by different countries in this

direction. The other areas which are not covered in the book but are mentioned in the introduction are the needs of young people, technologies, art and creativity, spirituality and lastly the problems specific to developing countries (although the problematic is set down in the first chapter).

It should be noted that even though the book is rather large, all the chapters of the book follow a common plan making it a fast and easy read. Each chapter begins with a description of learning objectives and ends with a small and frequently highly relevant debate and controversy. The chapters are punctuated with clear clinical examples and sometimes practical exercises for the readers ('what would you do in this situation?', even in the final chapter).

This book is to be recommended for anybody who is interested in a multi-, inter- or even cross-disciplinary approach to care for dementia. It appears to hold

particularly high added value for people in charge of educational programmes in the field of dementia for a professional audience from varied backgrounds. It could also be used for public managers in charge of setting up programmes involving different professional cultures. It might also be useful for a non-professional audience also because it is extremely didactic and accessible. The medical chapters are hence easily accessible to non-medical readers. It is also an important source of references in works involving sociology, economy, care or even anthropology and ethics. I give this book four stars out of five.

Dominique Somme, MD, PhD,  
*(1) Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, Hôpital Européen Georges Pompidou, Geriatrics, Paris, France*  
and *(2) Expert for the National Alzheimer Plan for the French Ministry of Health and Youth (General Direction of Health), Paris, France*