

Awareness and Influence in Health and Social Care

Author: Rosemary Cook
Director: Queen's Nursing Institute

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Such a book has been long in coming and could be a valuable tool for all clinicians who want to develop themselves professionally, beyond the clinical role. This book could also be called a "Dummies guide to making a difference", as it is an extremely readable book that considers practical approaches to developing skills which we often only develop through years of experience or by trial and error.

As occupational therapists, we often are more active at a micro-level than at a macro-level when it comes to making changes within our areas of practice. This book endeavours to help readers past the point of only focusing on clients and the services we provide and urges us to view things globally. It encourages us to become aware of the factors that influence our services and our profession; to identify what influences are needed, and how we, as practitioners, could facilitate these changes.

In the introduction, the author states that the book is about the "skills, habits and behaviours that make people influential" (p. xi). The three main objectives of the book are:

1. To help the reader explore new ways of expanding their knowledge of practice, policies and service where they work.
2. To suggest practical skills readers should have if they want to be a positive influence within their area of practice.
3. To look at ways to develop these skills so that we as practitioners can increase our influence concerning the development of policies and services.

The book is divided into four main sections, namely:

1. Principles: The author explores the concepts of 'awareness' and 'influence', the link between the two concepts, why we need to be aware of certain aspects and what we need to be aware of.
2. Developing awareness: In this section, the author discusses areas

that we need to become aware of and how we can make others aware of them as well. Professional, clinical, organisational and policy awareness are identified as being important for any practitioner. She looks at ways in which we could use resources such as articles and conferences to increase awareness. She goes beyond just making suggestions concerning what we need to do, but also gives practical advice that could be of help to many of us.

3. Developing influences: Section three explores practical ways in which we could be more influential as people within our professional environment. She gives helpful suggestions on, amongst other things, writing articles and commentaries, influencing discussions during meetings, making presentations and influencing policies.
4. Being visible: In the last section, she acknowledges that the above process could be time and resource consuming and that it could have a negative impact on the practitioner's family and professional life. She investigates coping strategies to deal with these problems.

Throughout the book, readers are urged to relate the content of the book to themselves and their own situation. The author created 'Mirror moments', where the reader reflects on the point of discussion by looking at the impact it could / does have on themselves, their practice and their attitudes. 'Personal development exercises' gives the reader an opportunity to practice the skills discussed. 'Portfolio pointers' affords opportunities for the reader to think about and record their actions. Lastly, the 'checklist for action' gives the reader the opportunity to explore action plans to increase awareness, develop networks and enhance their influence.

Although she, at times, uses nursing as an example, I think that this book could be useful for any discipline.

In essence, the book gives practical advice and guidance to practitioners on how to become an agent of change within their community (whether it is in a community in rural Kwazulu-Natal or a community within a tertiary hospital). I think it is a good resource for all practitioners striving to make a difference, but feeling unsure how to go about doing it. The challenge now is for a South African writer to make this concept truly South African. Enjoy!

Fasloen Adams

Lecturer, University of the Witwatersrand

Occupational Therapy with Older People

Author: Gail A. Mountain
(PhD, MPhil, DipCOT) Sheffield Hallam University

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This book aims to highlight the role of older people in the community and the contribution they make to the development and growth of society at large. It also aims to establish the importance of Occupational Therapy within a geriatric setting and shows how therapists can contribute in a meaningful and sensitive way to the life of an older person.

In the first section of the book reference is made to various in-depth studies (some conducted by the author) to ascertain the current level of services and resources that are available to older people and the impact societal perceptions have on their level of vulnerability and use of the health care system.

The importance of occupation for an individual and the function occupational therapists have in the commissioning of therapeutic services to older people is considered in the second section of the book. As well as alternative modalities of assessment and intervention is explored and the value of nurse and caregiver training is examined.

The publication provides one with a clear exposition of all the factors that impact on an older person's ability to lead a balanced and independent life, with distinctions drawn between the physical, emotional, cognitive and societal limitations that could affect this equilibrium.

The author has assimilated various models including Gary Kielhofner's 'Model of Human Occupation', in order to provide the reader with a conceptual framework for understanding older people and their multifaceted needs.

This book could provide therapists with a theoretical guide on how to establish and maintain a geriatric service. It reinforces the responsibility and duty practitioners have in fulfilling the needs of the population in its entirety when developing and delivering services. It is eloquently written and well researched, yet presupposes an extensive knowledge of various theoretical frameworks to truly appreciate and conceptualise the ideas discussed.

Although this book is theoretically sound, it has been written from a First World perspective – which makes application of the theory and practical techniques highlighted, somewhat difficult in the South African context. The publication could, however, elicit thought and debate concerning the current geriatric services provided in South Africa and the course that should be taken in order to align governmental policies and the formation of therapeutic programmes with the allocation of human resources and funding.

Jackie Schoch

Occupational Therapist
Private Practitioner - Adult Neurology and Geriatrics
Tutor - University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

