

BOOK REVIEW

Critical psychiatry textbook, by Peter C. Gøtzsche, 2022, kr. 250, PDF book available: scientificfreedom.dk/books

Critical Psychiatry Textbook, written by Peter C. Gøtzsche, is an excellent book, extremely well-documented and clearly written but, because of its content, reading it can be a very upsetting experience, therefore making it very difficult to review. It is also somewhat hard to read, if one does not know something about statistics. However, it is nevertheless possible to understand his argument without knowing anything about them! It is very upsetting, because the author's extremely well documented and well-argued thesis is that the psychopharmacological treatment of so-called mental illness, particularly psychosis, has not only been useless because it lacks any real efficacy but that such treatment has side-effects that can be potentially lethal or at the very least disabling for the recipient. For instance, the author estimates that up to 2007 the drug olanzapine, "Zyprexa", has led to the death of two hundred thousand recipients of this drug. Because of the psychiatric establishment's a priori belief in the biological causes of all so-called mental illnesses, they continue to search for new drugs that will be better able to treat the plethora of different mental illnesses that supposedly plague us. In their quest, they are willingly aided and abetted by large drug companies that make huge profits from the sale of the drugs that establishment psychiatry needs in its efforts to treat so-called mental illness by psychopharmacological means. For instance, the company that manufactures the drug olanzapine, "Zyprexa", made five billion dollars per year for more than a decade from the sales of this potentially lethal drug. Even though they were fined over one billion dollars for concealing these potential lethal side-effects in their marketing of it, this amount was much less than the amount of money that they generated from selling it.

The author asserts that so long as establishment psychiatry believes that research into the biological mechanisms of mental and behavioral activity can be of value, it cannot be of any real assistance to the so-called mentally ill beyond sedating them but at the terrible price of exposing them to potentially lethal or disabling side-effects. He predicts that sooner or later this situation will lead to the ruination of the profession. In the author's opinion, the only way that psychiatry can save itself, not to mention its present and future patients, from this awful fate is for it to employ various forms of patient-centered psychotherapy as its primary treatment modality. He makes the extremely valid point that in order to do so, psychiatry must first abandon its infatuation with double-blind studies since many "useful" psychosocial approaches to severe mental illness cannot be "blinded like a drug trial!"

The two forms of such treatment most favored by the author are the Open Dialogue Family and Network Approach which involves working with the patient's existing social network, starting within twenty-four hours after the patient becomes "ill". The other form, OPUS, models itself on an orchestra, which consists of many different instruments working together to play one particular piece of music. It establishes a partnership between the patient and all those who are part of treatment including the family and the social network. As an example of establishment Psychiatry's bias against client-centered psychotherapy and in favor of psychopharmacological treatment, the author points out that the last psychosocially orientated document produced by the National Institute of Mental Health was issued in 1961.

Establishment Psychiatry's mistreatment of patients by prescribing ineffective medications with harmful side-effects, according to the author, has produced a phenomenon unheard of in any other medical specialty, in which the word "survivor" refers to someone who has been successfully treated for one of the illnesses addressed by that particular specialty such as "cancer survivor" for someone

successfully treated for cancer. However, patient rights advocates use the term to refer to patients who have “survived” the treatment which they have received for their psychiatric disorder! All the assertions are impressively documented, though as a clinical social worker I am not at all competent to assess the validity of the many methodological analyses. I would like to conclude this review on a personal note by paraphrasing the famous folk singer Bob Dylan. How can the lives of such patients be in the palms of such apparent fools hands? To see them so badly mistreated couldn’t help but make me feel ashamed to be part of a profession involving the gross mistreatment of so-called psychiatric patients.

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