Integrative Mental Health Care: A Therapists Handbook (Norton Professional Books) by James Lake

Excellent Comprehensive User-Friendly Resource Guide For Practitioners

Making sense of complementary and alternative treatments in mental health care. In mental health care as in medical care, more and more clinicians are turning to unconventional diagnostic and therapeutic approaches to treat their patients in the most effective way possible. In fact, recent surveys have indicated that out-of-pocket costs in the U.S. for nontraditional treatments of psychiatric disorders equal costs of the more standard, covered medical therapies. Integrating traditional methods of therapeutic care (i.e., pharmacologic treatments, cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychodynamic therapy, etc.) with complementary and alternative medical (CAM) approaches—including the use of vitamin and mineral supplements, mindfulness training, yoga, light therapy, music, biofeedback, energy therapies, acupuncture, and other mind-body treatments—has been shown to be more effective than taking the traditional route alone. However, very few resources or guidelines exist for clinicians on how exactly to go about incorporating these nontraditional approaches into treatment. Likewise, very few trustworthy manuals exist for patients on what their options are in terms of CAM methods. This book makes sense of it all by offering practitioners a concise, evidence-based guide to the day-to-day management of common mental health problems using a CAM approach. The first part of the book lays the foundation, explaining the basics of complementary and integrative methods in mental health care. The second part, organized by core symptom, guides practitioners through the process of creating an effective and sound CAM treatment plan.

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My Personal Review:
This is a truly instructional text by internationally-known integrative psychiatrist, James Lake, MD that teaches practitioners how to think more integratively about all phases of the clinical process from assessment, formulation and treatment to considerations around making referrals. Written for non-medically trained mental health practitioners, Dr. Lake in a highly-accessible way covers a wide range of complementary and alternative (CAM) therapies and, citing available evidence, categorizes them in quick-reference tables as being "more substantiated" or "less substantiated" for a wide range of symptoms. He includes lifestyle recommendations as well as some of the latest research on natural supplements, and provides in-depth case vignettes to demonstrate the highly individualized, multifaceted nature of the integrative model. There are also many valuable resources listed in the appendices including reputable websites for evaluating natural supplements. Ethical, legal and safety guidelines are offered throughout the text so that practitioners with varying degrees of experience and familiarity with an integrative approach can feel more prepared to incorporate CAM into their work. Though a non-medically trained practitioner myself, I have also read Dr. Lake's considerably more technical "Textbook of Integrative Mental Health Care" and like having both texts for reference. For giving clients information, I am more likely to refer to the therapist's handbook, while I often copy info from the medical text for interested physicians. I find Dr. Lake's writings especially worthwhile because, in addition to being a very logical and thorough educator, he has deep respect for other healing traditions, is refreshingly open-minded yet rigorous, and shows great compassion as a clinician. His hope is to transform western medicine into "...something more beautiful, more meaningful and more effective". I find this a tremendously heartening counterbalance to the overemphasis on pharmaceuticals and other reductionistic paradigms that tend to dominate the mental health field.

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