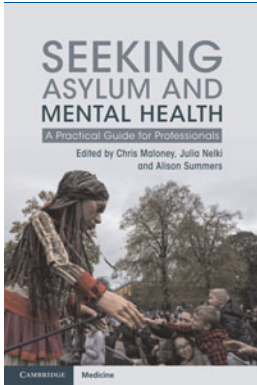


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



Seeking Asylum and Mental Health: A Practical Guide for Professionals

Edited by
Chris Maloney, Julia Nelki and Alison Summers. Cambridge University Press. 2022. £39.99 (hb). 308 pp. ISBN 9781911623977

The international sociopolitical context is rapidly changing and this undoubtedly affects the working contexts of professionals across a multitude of sectors and services. More specifically, for mental health professionals working with refugees, asylum seekers and their wider networks, clinicians must be able to respond appropriately and as effectively as possible to a wider range of (often new) needs, and clinical presentations.

What is particularly noteworthy about this book is its attempts to cover the vast terrain of clinical, systemic and strategic issues relevant to asylum seekers and refugees. In the first instance, the authors describe the distinction between asylum seekers and refugees, undoing the frequently seen homogenisation of those who have sought and are seeking refuge. The intricacies of the asylum process and the implications it holds for those engaged in it are explained, and the authors do not shy away from noting the gaps and potential benefits offered by the state systems.

The strengths of the book lie in its ability to weave in the voices of those who have accessed healthcare either as an asylum seeker or refugee. These narratives are embedded into the strategies and techniques provided to shift the professionals' approach to assessment, formulation, intervention and documentation. The authors make explicit the need for the clinician to note their own position and their (potentially) westernised approach to therapy. It boldly invites the reader to consider their approach to working in a culturally sensitive manner that goes beyond simple lip service to the practical ways one might reflect in (and outside) of the therapy room best to serve the person in front of them. Clinical dilemmas are openly shared and potential solutions are suggested. Nevertheless, the authors appreciate the limitations that professionals, particularly those working within statutory services, might face. Beyond acknowledgement, the authors propose practical steps and specific examples that would better serve the client, their families or their children.

From the perspective of a practising clinician working within the statutory and non-statutory sector, the chapter on Formulation and Diagnosis offered an engaging stance on how to embody both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the client within each clinical interaction, and provided helpful ideas on how best to navigate problem-saturated narratives, in a way that does better justice to the clients' experiences. Similarly, the chapters on Intervention (both specific and the essentials) and Therapeutic Complexity recognise the position of the client's contexts, the clinical variation and how to

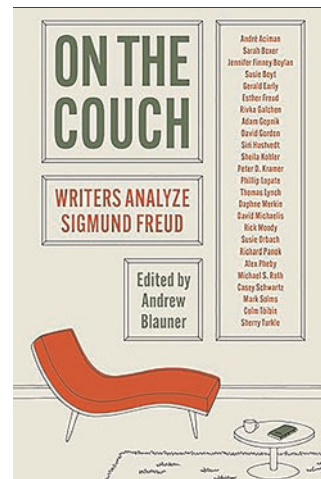
distinguish priorities in a realistic manner. The chapter dedicated to Children, Families and Young People offered a valuable approach to systems working, delivering treatment in a phased manner and naming the wider issues faced by young people who are no longer intensively embedded within state systems.

The book recognises the limitations and systemic restrictions of the front-line settings within which clinicians operate. Although it is optimistic about the degree of autonomy clinicians may have to implement the proposed ideas, it certainly gives options, detailed approaches and a range of therapeutic models for the practitioner to consider.

The population the book seeks to serve is brought to life through case studies, personal accounts and practical examples. They are presented as people; their needs are demystified and the stance of the book is a refreshing approach that counters the too often seen negative representation that appears within the media.

Kemi Komolafe , Helen Bamber Foundation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Email: reception@helenbamber.org

doi:10.1192/bjp.2024.135



On the Couch: Writers Analyze Sigmund Freud.

By Andrew Blauner. Princeton University Press. 2024. £20.49 (hb). 360 pp. ISBN 978-0691242439

Do today's busy psychiatrists still read Freud? Sadly, the answer – unless like curious agnostics familiarising themselves with the Bible or Koran – is probably no. Expected to master ever-expanding Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) categories, cutting-edge neuroscience and latest psychopharmacology, not to mention clunky computers and managerial mandates – why immerse oneself in the arcane byways of questionable theories? Infantile sexuality? Hmm. Dreams as wish fulfilments? Almost certainly not. Vaginal orgasm trumping clitoral? Come on! Castration anxiety as explanation for homosexuality? Forget it.

And yet ... without exposure to psychoanalytic ideas, including close reading of at least some of the founding father's key texts – the *Introductory Lectures*, *Dora*, *Papers on Technique* – something vital to the art of psychiatry is lost. After all, complacency about our role and societal respect would be misplaced. Ousted by clinical psychology from our previous leadership position, we are, not entirely unfairly, sometimes accused of being mere 'pill pushers'. When it comes to interpersonal competence, not a few of us appear overpaid and under-skilled.

The premiss of this intriguing book is that, questions of outcome and evidence-based practice aside, Freud just won't go away. He remains an essential companion if we are to understand ourselves, others and the contours of the modern world. To that end, Blauner has assembled a *potpourri* of established writers, all