

## Book Review

*WORKING WITH THE ELDERLY: A TRAINING MANUAL* (Revised Edition) Elizabeth S. Deichman, OTR and Catherine P. O'Kane OTR (Editors). Potentials Development for Health and Aging Services, Buffalo, New York, 1980, 119 pages.

*Working with the Elderly: A Training Manual* (Revised Edition) is intended for use by persons who have the responsibility for planning and implementing activity programs for health-impaired older adults. The manual is an outgrowth of training seminars sponsored by the Lakes Area Regional Medical Program, the Veterans Administration Hospital (Erie, PA), and the New York State Office of Rehabilitation Therapies. The authors, Ms. Deichman and Ms. O'Kane, are faculty members in the School of Health Related Professions, State University of New York at Buffalo. The school has contributed faculty expertise to the several training programs.

Three objectives are listed for the manual:

1. To be able to demonstrate competency in the planning and carrying out of activities which increase participation for the elderly in their social environment.
2. To learn specific techniques in a milieu therapy setting which are conducive to the individual's achievement of his maximum level of function.
3. To be able to apply creative and original thinking in developing the techniques required for the above objectives.

To achieve these objectives, the manual is divided into four major units, each with a number of subsections (chapters) written by the authors and other contributors. Unit I, "Essential Concepts," presents information on "the inter-relatedness of the older person and his environment." Primary emphasis here is on the older adult's sense of identity and the professional as a major influence on that identity. Unit II, "The Specialist's Approach,"

provides a series of commentaries from different professional perspectives, “to consider in helping the individual to function at his optimum physical and mental level.” Included are social work, hospital services, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and visual rehabilitation.

Unit III, “Opportunities for Developing Creative and Original Activities,” reviews several ideas for “establishing different goals for different patients in different situations.” Reality orientation, remotivation, music, and volunteers are among the topics covered. Unit IV consists of seven Appendices, on areas related to the preceding sections: rules for reality orientation, ideas for program planning, information needed for a patient profile, philosophical objectives for a nursing home or intermediate care facility activities program, suggestions for planning a party, a sample monthly calendar of activities, and possible further reading.

In this reviewer’s opinion, the manual falls far short as a training tool, unnecessarily placing a great deal of responsibility on the intended audience, for making effective use of its content. In fact, the manual appears and reads much more similarly to a book than to a training package. For example, although the Table of Contents sets up four units, *no* such demarcations occur in the text itself; chapters just follow one another, without transitional statements by the authors, introductions or summaries, or obvious internal organization.

Following in this same vein, specially important information is not highlighted (e.g., even simply by underlining), nor are there a sufficient number of charts, diagrams, or summary tables. The three overall objectives noted above are not listed prominently or with any special emphasis. As a result, chapters are highly individualistic and seem to “hang”, with no clear direction—there is little structure or purpose to relate them back to. Some improvement might be gained by placing (or reading) Unit III chapters A and B at the beginning, but even this change holds limited potential, since other notable problems exist.

Apart from an italicized question or two at the beginning of each chapter, there are no “discussion questions” or similar integrative exercises accompanying any of the chapters. The seven appendices (Unit IV) are not referenced by any of the chapters; they are truly just appended. Content simply exists as is, and must then somehow be implemented. An “activities program” is not defined until page 65.

Activity program settings and types of patients are not specified. The impression is that “nursing homes” are the primary focus, though a hospital context is presented in some instances. Activities

are also considered relatively independently from the client's functional level. An activity director could do no more than glean the most general principles and recommendations. For example, the basic question, "Where should a new activity director start their programming?" is never raised or addressed.

In regard to content, most chapters did not impress this writer as detailed or thorough. Most of the 28 chapters are not of sufficient length to permit satisfactory elaboration of their various headings/topics. Exceptions are the sections on speech/hearing and vision, which present enough information to be of use to an audience of activity directors. In contrast, the section on psychological aspects of aging is devoted largely to organic brain syndrome and depression, and the biological aspects of aging section would probably be of use only to the most beginning persons. Much of Unit II appears only marginally related to the training of activity directors (e.g., "A Registered Nurse Considers Nursing Attitudes To The Elderly;" "A Social Worker Looks at Problems of The Elderly".) Brevity, book as opposed to training manual style, lack of emphasis on important content, lack of guides for self-instruction, and no initial specification of what constitutes an "activities program" or the usual role of an activities director results in these chapters having little place to go.

Chapters are poorly referenced to any literature, and in fact on page 91 a diagram has been omitted. In another chapter the text makes reference to accompanying material for music exercises, which was not in any of the appendices. The suggested further reading is also becoming quite "old" by most standards (1961-1973). It is difficult to tell if the chapters themselves were written specially for this volume (only authors' names are given, no program affiliations), or if they are simply excerpts/transcripts from actual workshop presentations.

In sum, this writer cannot recommend *Working with the Elderly: A Training Manual* (Revised Edition). After completing reading, it was not clear (or even implied) where or how to begin using the material. The task of using the manual (a word which is not an accurate description) falls squarely on the reader, which is not appropriate. A potential user will probably find little to take issue with in the content of what is written, but is likely to be quite disappointed in what has been omitted, both in depth of content and structure/format.

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