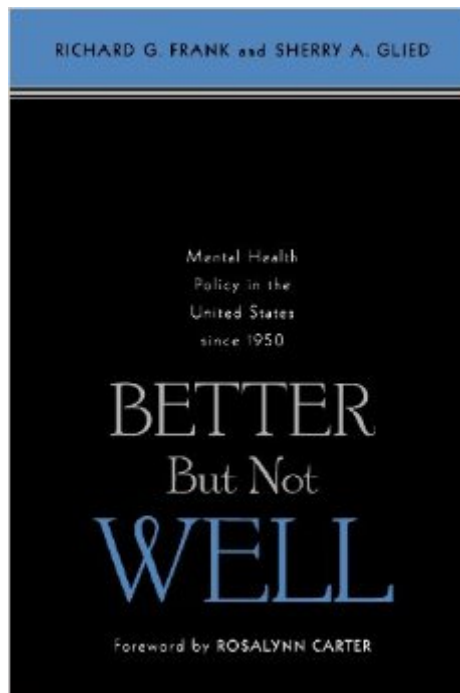


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Better But Not Well: Mental Health Policy In The United States Since 1950



Synopsis

The past half-century has been marked by major changes in the treatment of mental illness: important advances in understanding mental illnesses, increases in spending on mental health care and support of people with mental illnesses, and the availability of new medications that are easier for the patient to tolerate. Although these changes have made things better for those who have mental illness, they are not quite enough. In *Better But Not Well*, Richard G. Frank and Sherry A. Glied examine the well-being of people with mental illness in the United States over the past fifty years, addressing issues such as economics, treatment, standards of living, rights, and stigma. Marshaling a range of new empirical evidence, they first argue that people with mental illness—severe and persistent disorders as well as less serious mental health conditions—are faring better today than in the past. Improvements have come about for unheralded and unexpected reasons. Rather than being a result of more effective mental health treatments, progress has come from the growth of private health insurance and of mainstream social programs—such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, housing vouchers, and food stamps—and the development of new treatments that are easier for patients to tolerate and for physicians to manage. The authors remind us that, despite the progress that has been made, this disadvantaged group remains worse off than most others in society. The "mainstreaming" of persons with mental illness has left a policy void, where governmental institutions responsible for meeting the needs of mental health patients lack resources and programmatic authority. To fill this void, Frank and Glied suggest that institutional resources be applied systematically and routinely to examine and address how federal and state programs affect the well-being of people with mental illness.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It's a relatively unbiased view of the evolution of mental health policy in the US, and it covers most of the key points, from availability and structure of care to the costs and financing, as well as quality of care. There's also some minor discussion of rights and social stigma based on survey data. However, it buys into the mainstream narrative of psychiatry, which is very positive toward the field, which is challenge by a lot of new research, as well as books such as "American Psychosis". This book is a great start, but you should probably couple it with a few other readings if you really want a comprehensive understanding of what's happened.

Provides a good historical overview of the mental health system. Details the rise and fall of various therapies and gaps in the system. Purchase this book with the recognition that its value is in its historical / policy approach of the subject. Some of the commentary on pharmacology is dated - example, tricyclics being noted as first line therapy for depression.

I found the coverage of factors that have impacted mental health care in the US very comprehensive and authoritative. The authors are clearly thoughtful about the complexities, including the philosophical and sociological perspectives at play, and extremely knowledgeable about the pragmatic details of policy development and implementation. An excellent work!

Through access from my university and eJournals, this book is downloadable and freely accessible online. However, if you don't have journal access online, it's still an interesting book to have for reference.

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