BOOK REVIEW

Pathways to Illness, Pathways to Health

Angele McGrady and Donald Moss (2013), New York: Springer

Reviewed by Daniel Rapport, MD

Ever since Descartes conceptually argued for a separation between the body and the mind, Western culture has struggled with the notion that our friends, our family members, even our spouses are “crazy” or “weak” if they should ever suffer a mental illness.

The book entitled Pathways to Illness, Pathways to Health by Angele McGrady and Donald Moss is a definitive refutation of Descartes ill-advised and incorrect assertion. To those for whom Descartes’ concept of a separation of the mind and body dies hard, McGrady and Moss’s text is a necessary read. For beginners of health science education, medical students, or psychology students, and for seasoned practitioners and health scientists, this text has something to offer. For the beginner, it connects the dots succinctly between the body and the mind. It blurs boundaries between the two so thoroughly after reading that it is difficult even to conceptualize the division at all. Every page is documented with reference after reference to the connection between the mind and the body. In Pathways to Illness, Pathways to Health, McGrady and Moss take a systems approach to the most common medical and mental health conditions. They lay out an outline that guides the reader through the physiological changes that occur in the mind that lead to the biologic manifestations of difficult to treat medical illnesses. Once clarified they lead us back to a state of well-being, systematically using a step-wise approach that promotes the natural homeostatic balance between the mind and the body. The authors accept the potential advantages and the necessity of modern medicine, but they are unapologetic in recognizing the importance of utilizing the body’s fundamental functions of breathing, sleeping, good nutrition, and living in moderation within one’s limits to bring the body, mind, and behavior back into balance. It is clear from each case example that not only is the well-being of the individual enhanced by this approach, but also the well-being of family members and loved ones.

Another refreshing element of this text is its organization. Each chapter is consistently constructed, starting with a discussion of the basic science, and explaining the underlying pathophysiology of every condition. Explanations are clear, concise, and well-referenced making them exceedingly accessible for the novice and a useful review for the seasoned clinician. Then, a case example is offered in which the pathways to illness model, followed by the pathways to health approach, are systematically applied. Practitioners get a feel for both the science and the method as to why and how to approach the patients with the most complex disorders that challenge us in our daily practices, from depression and anxiety to fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, substance abuse disorders, sleep disorders, headache, back pain, diabetes, hypertension and more. Discussion of each of these disorders is filtered through a lens of the step-wise progression of the Pathways to Illness and Pathways to Health model so that any clinician, from beginner to seasoned clinician, can come away from reading this book with a working understanding of this treatment approach. For any beginner or experienced clinician McGrady and Moss’s text, Pathways to Illness, Pathways to Health, is a concise explanation of what has for so many of us seemed vague, poorly understood, and until now poorly explained conditions that were difficult to treat. Now I would say this book gives all of us a concise and systematic approach based on the latest research and excellent clinical insights. I recommend it highly.

Daniel Rapport

Correspondence: Daniel Rapport, MD, University of Toledo, Toledo, OH, email: daniel.rapport@utoledo.edu.