

**BOOK REVIEW****“LIFE AFTER INJURY: A REHABILITATION MANUAL FOR THE INJURED AND THEIR HELPERS”**

Authors: Liz Hobbs, Susan McDonough, Ann O’Callaghan

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This is an excellent text on basic rehabilitation principles and practice for anyone working in an environment with limited resources, facilities and expertise. It is directed at residents and rehabilitation workers of Third World countries, and includes many examples from war or work-related injuries such as landmines and farming accidents.

The book starts off with an introduction to rehabilitation, role of family and friends in the process, community-based rehabilitation, and a problem-solving approach starting with assessment, planning, solution (intervention) and finally a review. The authors then discuss the goals of rehabilitation along the lines of healing, becoming able again, and rejoining the community. The sections on Healing starts off with early rehabilitation in the first seven days followed by long-term care issues. It then talks about specific problems such as pain, emotions, pressure sores, infections of joints and bones, wounds and swelling. Rehabilitation of specific injuries including spinal cord injury, brain damage, nerve injuries, burns, and amputations are subsequently discussed, followed by an entire section on fractures.

In the sections on Becoming Able, the authors go into causes for functional difficulties, followed by a discourse on splints, mobility aids and equipment, and ways to compensate for disabilities with simple devices or techniques. They then discuss return to work, community attitudes and accessibility issues in the sections under Joining In. The authors finish off by addressing topics for the rehabilitation worker or anyone wanting to set up a rehabilitation programme.

The book includes many stories that set the scene for a particular rehabilitation problem. It also has multiple black-and-white pictures and diagrams that clarify and enable visualisation of the points made in a way that words could not. It does not dwell excessively on academic concepts but instead emphasises the practical, e.g. simple yet adequately-detailed exercise instructions, or with suggestions on use of indigenous materials such as plastic pipes for prosthetic legs.

Targeting a Third World audience does mean limitations in the applicability of the approaches and interventions recommended. Nevertheless, many of the principles discussed are generally useful. The wisdom of recommending specific dosages and drugs such as ketamine, pentazocine, atropine, diazepam, and antibiotics may be called to question as the authors are not doctors, although it is understood that the circumstances may include lack of physician availability. The authors appropriately bring up the issue of risk of drug dependency. The option of teaching spinal patients to apply abdominal pressure for bladder emptying is generally not advised, although the authors do warn that care must be taken so as not to force urine into the kidneys.

It is very commendable that the authors permit and even encourage copying and reproduction (provided that it is done for non-commercial use, and that source of reference is clearly cited) as this book is potentially an invaluable guide for the target audience.

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