

Review of: Issues in Therapeutic Recreation: Toward the New Millennium.

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Article:

In the forward of this text, Peg Connolly noted that there is "an increased momentum of change surrounding us in our professional practice areas. . ." (p. ix). She cautioned the reader to be "diligent" in our review of our profession and described the purpose of this text as providing the reader with a "professional vehicle for review" of our profession. As promised, Compton's Issues in Therapeutic Recreation: Toward a New Millennium does provide its readers, students and professionals alike, an opportunity to examine the field of therapeutic recreation in areas ranging from advocacy to practice techniques. Introducing new and critical issues appropriate for the new millennium such as legislation, health care financing, credentialling, and research, this text provides a wide range of issues and concepts to understand and discuss.

The following review of this text will begin by giving the reader a "tour" of the text, highlighting pertinent and new issues in this edition. The review will close with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the text. The first unit, entitled "Issues of National and Global Concern," addresses perspectives of advocacy in therapeutic recreation. Issues of health care reform, social justice, and future directions are presented and discussed regarding how therapeutic recreation can be a vital part of the health care arena. These chapters raise challenging questions about philosophy, inconsistent professional preparation, and quality control in therapeutic recreation. Additionally, they emphasize our professional responsibilities to contributing to the quality of life of people with disabilities. This section is particularly useful to students who need to understand our role in health care and the importance of advocacy not only for our field, but the power of therapeutic recreation as an agent of change.

The second unit is entitled "Issues of Public Policy." This section presents political and economic perspectives of the field through discussions of legislation, government policy, and health care financing. These chapters give strong insight into the "larger picture" of the field and what factors play a role in its survival. The importance of understanding and working within economic, political, and legislative systems is outlined with implications and directions for practice for therapeutic recreation professionals.

The third unit, "Issues in Professionalization," presents the foundational issues for therapeutic recreation students and professionals. Beginning with a chapter on ethics and addressing the "good life," this unit discusses the status and future needs of the field and critically assesses where we, as a field, need to go. Issues including therapeutic recreation education, continuing education, accreditation/credentialling, and research are discussed. Additionally, issues such as diversity and perspectives of administrators broaden the scope of this unit.

The last unit, "Issues in Practice" offers a range of material from "how-to's" of specific interventions to broader areas of discussion of common practice areas. Evaluation, standards, normalization/integration, as well as specific interventions such as wilderness and experiential therapies, behavioral models, and cognitive therapy programs are presented and explained representing some of the newer approaches to therapeutic recreation interventions.

Several characteristics stand out in this text. First, while nowhere near a fatal flaw for the use and understanding of this text, a clearer placement of some of the chapters might be useful. The four units topics are appropriate and well organized, however, some of the chapters chosen within the units seem misplaced. As an instructor who has used this text in class, the organization of some of the topics was sometimes confusing to students. For example, in unit two, the political issues of Australia might be better combined with the chapter about Canadian models of integration from the fourth unit representing therapeutic recreation from an international perspective. Similarly, the chapter dealing with assessment in the unit on professionalization might be better placed into the unit on practice issues.

Additionally, some of the chapters such as behavioral medicine, cognitive therapy techniques, wilderness therapy programs, and adventure/challenge experiences followed a similar theme that departed slightly from the other chapters in this section. Each seemed to deal with actual "how-to" programs. As a result, these chapters seemed potentially to bond better in a unit on programming.

In terms of content, the text offers strong material about the need and techniques for advocating, understanding, and practicing as respectable professionals in the field of therapeutic recreation. In most chapters, relevant issues and concerns are raised providing enough history for the reader to understand why these topics are issues today. Additionally, individual authors outline their own, thought-provoking ideas of where the field needs to go to exist and grow in a changing society. In addition to traditional formats of presenting issues for review and discussion, interesting interviews with professionals such as health care administrators provided a different way of understanding some of the current issues.

The main criticisms for this text lie in the "omissions" of materials from the first edition of this text. Perhaps the most notable are chapters on the history of the field, philosophical issues, and professional organizations. Although these are topics that have been with the field since its inception, I nevertheless believe they are still critical today. These topics serve as an important foundation to asking and answering other significant questions. Students in the field need to understand some of the history and more importantly the current dialogue regarding the philosophical perspectives in the field. Not understanding the complete picture of our growth and development professionally and philosophically compromises students' abilities to understand and respond to professional issues presented to therapeutic recreation professionals today and in the future.

In summary, this text provides a good resource for discussion of current issues in the field of therapeutic recreation. If used with additional materials that speak to history and philosophy, this text contributes to a well-rounded and effective course of study for advanced students and professionals in therapeutic recreation.