



Book Review

An Introduction to Medical Dance/Movement Therapy

Health Care in Motion

Sharon W. Goodill

Paperback, 240pp, Pub. Jessica Kingsley 2005

Sharon Goodill has written this book with great skill and ability in researching current literature and interviewing current practitioners; to bring together a wealth of information and current thinking in Dance Movement Therapy in the medical field. This book is an outcome of her study for a PhD in medical psychology with a concentration in mind/body studies.

It focuses on the application of DMT for people with a primary medical illness as an emerging specialty (excluding psychiatric and developmental disorders) e.g. neurological conditions, heart disease, cancer. Sharon's perspective of the DMT role in the medical field is primarily as a psychosocial support intervention and complementary to conventional medical treatment. She indicates her book is "descriptive and pre-theoretical ... as the work (in this field) is still emerging"(p.10).

The book is divided into 3 main parts: relevant theoretical and scientific knowledge; examples of DMT work in the field; and areas for future development and research. She has drawn on a wide range of theories and constructs from a variety of related disciplines that helps to inform and develop the emerging theories of DMT. Some of the concepts that help to form the "scaffolding of a theoretical foundation"(p.18) for medical DMT come from the biopsychosocial model, systems theory, mind/body integration, Health Related Quality of Life (HRQOL), and other healing approaches. Some basic and concise information is given on these related disciplines, models and theories. Current knowledge and research from the field of medical science has also been included to provide further substance to the mind/body connections and validates the DMT approach.

Sharon discusses various psychological concepts relevant to DMT in the medical field such as the stress and relaxation responses, body image, use of imagery, coping strategies, emotion and non verbal expression. Many patients with diseases and injuries "report vivid and poignant body imagery that is connected to the illness and the body's experience with it"(p.49). DMT with its focus on psychophysical and emotional integration, has a valuable role to play in 'helping a patient make the adjustments to a changed or impaired body in illness or after injury' (p.50). Sharon refers to Wise and Kierr Wise's book (1985) in which they state "body image problems can be successfully treated with movement therapy because it is in action and interaction that the inner, feeling self and the outer, physical self can get to know one another and work together to fill mutual needs"(p.176).

Some detail is given on the science behind DMT drawing on the knowledge and research in various areas of medical science including the stress response, the immune system, emotional states, and breath.

The application of DMT in the medical field covers a wide range of conditions including neurological, heart disease, pulmonary disease, somatic disorders, HIV/AIDS, chronic pain, children with varied illnesses, and cancer. For example in the neurological area, where there is already a lot of literature to support DMT, Sharon refers to a convincing clinical research study carried out by Berrol and colleagues (1997) investigating the effectiveness of group DMT for elders who had sustained non-progressive neurological insult (e.g. stroke, TBI, cerebral aneurysm). The study had a control group who received standard care. Pre and post-test assessments were carried out. The results indicated positive gains in cognitive performance, social interaction, and physical action tasks after 5 months treatment with DMT thus demonstrating its effectiveness with this population.

There is a chapter on DMT in cancer care with a focus on the area of women with breast cancer. Here DMT provides a very effective way of processing, working through and adjusting to significant life changes on a deep felt level. Guided imagery and metaphors in movement are often used by DMT specialists in this field.

Sharon highlights the way forward and to make further progress by working together with other disciplines, educating our colleagues in health care, and through research. Considerable reference is made to existing studies and research (though research in this field is still in its infancy). This existing body of knowledge can be used as a foundation for future research and several potential research questions and topics are presented. The leaning is towards the quantitative approach to provide evidence based information about the benefits for medical patients.

This book is a valuable contribution to DMT. It is readable with a depth of information and resources, and is highly referenced. It is a valuable book for students, DMTs, and students and practitioners in other disciplines interested in the work and potential of DMT in the medical field.

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