

Brasile, F., Skalko, T. K., & Burlingame, J. (Eds.). (1998). *Perspectives in recreational therapy: Issues of a dynamic profession*. Ravensdale, WA: Idyll Arbor.

Reviewed by

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Biographical Information

Bryan McCormick is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Park and Recreation Administration at Indiana University. His teaching and research has been in the area of therapeutic recreation, with particular interest in the area of mental health and social networks. He has taught graduate level issues courses, as well as undergraduate level instruction in management in TR.

One of the keys in the preparation of future practitioners and leaders is the development of critical thinking skills that equip students to see broader levels of issues as opposed to just the problems of practice. Brasile, Skalko, and Burlingame's overview of issues in the field of recreational therapy represents a welcome addition to the field's ever growing body of professional literature aiding educators in preparing disciplined minds. *Perspectives in Recreational Therapy* addresses a number of commonly accepted areas of concern in preparing students for practice in recreation therapy (RT). In addition, the text presents a few interesting and important topics that have been overlooked in much of the RT literature. Finally, the editors do a good job in clearly identifying their target audience. Throughout the text, recreational therapy is consistently presented as an allied health profession. Although this characterization may not fit with all practitioners' or educators' beliefs, this text does not try to be "all things to all people." I find this quality commendable.

The text is an edited compilation of 24 authors' works. Topics are presented over 27 chapters organized under 7 different sections. Each chapter lists learning activities and study/review questions related to the chapter. Overall, it appears that learning activities aid in presenting and expanding on concepts. In addition, the study questions appear to represent major concepts presented in the chapters. According to the introductory chapter, the text is organized along a "micro to macro progression" in which issues at the "heart" of the field are presented first, followed by issues of practice, facilities, consumers, professional preparation and credentialing, external influences, and finally issues of the future of the field.

The initial section provides some introduction and overview to the text. One of the chapters I found noteworthy in this introductory section is Ann James' work on the historical development of the field. As a field, recreation therapy has been criticized as

being ahistorical, and James' piece adds to our historical knowledge. Additional chapters address topics such as managing quality and ethics.

The subsequent section presents "Issues of the Field" through six chapters. Chapters representative of this section are those such as "Clinical Practice Models," "Recreational Therapy in the Community," and "Efficacy Research in Recreational Therapy." Two chapters that caught my attention in this section are "Healthy Caring and "The Right Stuff." Spielman and Blaschko address the topic of helping caregivers to care for themselves (healthy caring). This chapter does a good job of providing an overview of issues related to stress, burnout, and codependency; topics that are often overlooked. It also addresses ways for students and therapists to examine their own beliefs and practices that may increase their risks for burnout. Most importantly, it provides information on strategies for remaining healthy as a caregiver. Russoniello's chapter on "The Right Stuff" provides more or less an occupational aptitude check. According to the author, the chapter's purpose is to suggest a certain "character" as a guide for practitioners as well as students to "decide if they have the 'right stuff' to be a good recreational therapist" (p. 193). I liked this chapter because it can be used to facilitate self-awareness among students regarding their motivation for enrolling in a recreational therapy degree program.

Section three provides an overview of "Issues of Facilities" across the two chapters. Rickerson and Burlingame's "Health Care Delivery Systems" provides an introduction to three healthcare delivery "systems." In addition, Niemeyer & Burlingame's chapter on "Outcomes" presents a good introduction to outcomes measurement as a basis for program management and evaluation. Although the chapters are presented adequately, the depth of presentation of this section is not consistent with other sections. It may have been more effective to combine this section with other chapters within the text to develop a section on "Issues of Service Delivery."

Section four presents topics related to "Issues of Consumers." Chapters in the section include presentation of topics such as customer service, confidentiality, attitudes toward disability, excess disability, and accessibility. In my opinion, there are two noteworthy chapters in this section. First, burlingame's treatment of confidentiality is well developed, presenting background information on issues of confidentiality and privacy. In addition, burlingame offers a flow chart that identifies the steps to take regarding how and when to break confidentiality (in one instance). I found this a very useful device in a text of this sort because it allows the reader to concretely "walk" through the process. Another noteworthy chapter is Katsinas' presentation of the concept of excess disability. I have typically seen this concept presented in relation to clients in long-term care settings; however, Katsinas does a very good job of identifying the potential for excess disability in all populations. Furthermore, she identifies a clear role for the recreation therapist in combating excess disability.

The fifth section covers issues of education, training, and credentialing. This section includes chapters on adult learning, degree programs, health care credentialing,

NCTRC certification, mentorship, and copyrights. Of all the sections in this text, chapters in this section logically comprise the larger issue represented by the section. Connolly's chapter on health care credentialing is one of the chapters that stood out in this section. She provides a good overview of issues related to licensure and certification. Although a bit one-sided (her presentation "leans" a bit in support of national certification), this chapter really does present the topics as issues, presenting both supporting and opposing evidence. Somewhat in contrast, I did not find Gustafson and burlingame's chapter on "Copyrights and Practice" really enough of an issue to warrant a chapter. Although I think this information is worthwhile, it could be condensed and presented as one sub-topic in a chapter on ethical practice.

The final two sections are grouped into topical areas of "Outside Agencies" and "Issues for the Future." Within the topical area of outside agencies, chapters on reimbursement and information technologies are offered, whereas issues of the future are represented by chapters on global trends and the "Future of the Profession." I found burlingame's chapter on information technologies a good presentation of the technologies presently changing the nature of the provision of healthcare. Granted, there are still many agencies far behind the "curve" in the systematic use of information technologies, but it is unquestionably the way of the future. burlingame's chapter adds to the resources educators and practitioners have to prepare themselves and their students for practice into the next millennium. Finally, Lahey's chapter on the impacts of global trends is also one of the remarkable chapters in the last two sections of this text for its presentation of topics that provide no easy answers. Lahey's chapter is one of the chapters that actually presents topics as issues—that is, topics that may be viewed as both threats and opportunities. I liked this chapter because it could be easily used to facilitate critical thinking among students.

Generally, the book appears to be most useful in upper division courses. The inclusion of "issues" courses is not unusual in RT curricula, and this book would fit as a text in such courses. I do not feel that it would serve well in lower division courses, as many of the chapters seem to assume previous knowledge. For example, concepts of managing quality and reimbursement are considerably beyond the scope of single chapters. In order for these concepts to be critically considered by students, previous learning in such areas seems a prerequisite. By the same token, the text appears to have merit in terms of use within introductory or overview courses at the graduate level. In graduate courses this text could be paired with a substantial slate of additional readings to increase the depth of presentation of topics.

However, the text is not flawless. One area that I found to be problematic is the organization and coordination of chapters within sections. Overall, introductory comments are lacking in almost all sections (the first section was an exception). As a result, I found it difficult to find a common "thread" that ties chapters together as representative of the section. For example, there is no real explanation of how "Health Care Delivery Systems" (chapter 11) and "Outcomes" (chapter 12) are representative of "Issues of

Facilities” (Section III), as opposed to “Issues of the Field” (Section II). Subsequent editions of this text would be served by attending to the introduction of content areas so that readers could place the specifics of individual chapters within larger conceptual frameworks.

Another concern I had was that, at times, terms are presented without adequate explanation. For example in Chapter 11 on “Health Care Organization” the authors mention that one of the main concerns in health care is a “fiduciary relationship between the caregiver and the patient” (p. 206), yet the term “fiduciary” is never explained. I must admit that, although I have heard the term, I had to look it up in the dictionary. As the intended audience of this text appears to be students, their understanding (and vocabularies) would benefit from more explanation. In general, the editors could have anticipated that many of these terms would be new to students, and a simple explanation of terms would aid in comprehension.

My final area of criticism is that chapter titles are not always representative of the coverage of content in their pages. For example, burlingame’s chapter on “Clinical Models of Practice” actually spends 3/4 of the chapter setting up, and presenting burlingame and Skalko’s (1997) Recreation Service Model. The chapter really is more accurately a presentation of one practice model. Another example of this inconsistency is Rickerson and burlingame’s chapter on “Healthcare Delivery Systems.” The majority of the chapter is spent on critical paths (5 pages), whereas issues of fee-for-service (2 pages) and managed care (a little over 2 pages) get considerably shorter treatment. One of my concerns in this particular chapter is that students reading such a chapter may assume that the most important healthcare delivery structure is “critical pathways.” Yet by the authors own statements, critical pathways is “a tool used to plan and document patient care” (p. 212). I question whether critical pathways actually constitutes a “system” of care on par with fee-for-service and managed care systems.

In summary, all works of a body of literature are open to criticism; this text is no exception. However this work represents the first text, to my knowledge, that expressly addresses practice issues from the perspective of recreation therapy. Although there are a number of similar topics presented in another survey text that takes a “therapeutic recreation” approach to practice (c.f., Compton, 1997), Brasile, Skalko and burlingame offer another alternative in presenting topics relevant to the practice of recreation therapy. This is a text that I would consider for adoption in my own courses.

References

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Professionals working in the health care industry are expected to possess an extensive knowledge about medical terminology and abbreviations. This becomes particularly challenging when terms have several interpretations. Furthermore, a lack of useful and accessible reference materials exist in the health care field.

Health care educators and students also face this challenge of inadequate reference materials. To uphold quality educational programs, health care educators must maintain currency in the field, use the most up-to-date resources, and provide students with accurate, accessible information. Historically, this has been a difficult challenge to meet.

Three resources that address this need are reviewed: *Medical Abbreviations for the Health Professions*, *Glossary for Therapists*, and *Study Guide for Glossary for Therapists*. Each of the resources may be used independently. However, the reviewer believes that when used together, the resources lend support to each other and serve as an invaluable collection of reference materials.

Medical Abbreviations for the Health Professions

Medical Abbreviations for the Health Professions is a pocket-size, 60 page quick reference of medical abbreviations found in clinical and non-clinical settings. Abbreviations are listed in alphabetical order. Miscellaneous symbols often used in medical charting, the Greek alphabet, and legislation impacting allied health are included in separate