

Preface

Introduction

A Public Health Perspective of Women's Mental Health examines major issues in the organization, financing, and provision of women's mental health services. It also presents an overview of the epidemiology of mental disorders across the lifespan of women, an in-depth discussion of selected mental and substance use disorders that particularly affect women, and includes an examination of emerging issues in women's mental health.

The idea for this text originated during the preparation of a special issue of the *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research* (JBHS&R Volume 32, Number 2, 2005) focusing on *The Impact of Co-Occurring Disorders and Violence on Women*. Prior to the publication of this special issue of the JBHS&R, virtually all published texts examined women's mental health services from a clinical and/or biomedical perspective. In addition, it became apparent to one of the editors (MB) while teaching a graduate level women's mental health course at the University of South Florida College of Public Health that despite the increased attention in the past decade to women's mental health issues, no text in the medical or behavioral health literature could be identified which offered an extensive examination of women's mental health from a public health perspective. This text attempts to respond to this gap in the literature by providing the current state of knowledge on women's mental health and examining the need for mental health services and the effect of mental disorders upon women's daily lives.

This text was developed with three objectives in mind: (1) to highlight mental health and substance use disorders of particular concern to women, (2) to emphasize services delivery and services research issues in women's mental health, and (3) to provide a discussion of these critical issues from a (multidisciplinary) public health perspective. In order to accomplish these goals, an editorial decision was made to include a diverse set of chapters, ranging from theory-driven chapters to more traditional quantitative and empirically based chapters. The result is an exceptional volume that we hope accomplishes all three objectives.

This text is particularly timely given the substantial changes in financing and services delivery of health and mental health services at the national and state levels.

In addition, this text attempts to fill the void of materials examining women's mental health services in a variety of environments, including jails and prisons, the workplace, and rural areas of America.

Nationally recognized experts in the fields of women's mental health, services research, practice, and policy were invited to prepare chapters specifically for this initiative. The chapter contributors include individuals from various areas of expertise, including public health, social work, psychiatry, public administration, sociology, clinical and social psychology, health behavior/health education, substance abuse, and education.

This text was designed for a variety of audiences, including (1) undergraduate students in the social and behavioral sciences, (2) graduate students in public health, community health and mental health, women's studies, social work, psychiatric and community health nursing, community and medical psychology, medical sociology, medical anthropology, community and social psychiatry, and other graduate and postdoctoral students in the allied behavioral health sciences, (3) professionals currently employed in mental health and substance abuse programs in various healthcare organizations, including health maintenance organizations, women's health centers, hospitals, substance abuse clinics, and community mental health centers, and (4) consumers, policymakers, advocates, and professionals involved in the fields of mental health and substance abuse services within local, state, and federal government.

Organization of the Text

The chapters in this text are organized into three basic components: Part I. *Overview and Epidemiology of Mental Disorders in Women* (Chaps. 1–5), Part II. *Selected Disorders* (Chaps. 6–10), and Part III. *Services Delivery and Emerging Research* (Chaps. 11–20).

In Chap. 1, Becker and Levin provide an introduction to the text and a look at the meaning of a public health approach to women's mental health services. Chapter 2 (Warner and Bott), Chap. 3 (Alexander and McMahon), and Chap. 4 (Kenna, Ghezal, and Rasgon) focus on the epidemiology and treatment of mental disorders in children and adolescents, adults, and older women, with an emphasis on gender differences, risk factors, symptom presentation, course of illness, and current treatment approaches. In Chap. 5, Larson and McGraw discuss the importance of providing high-quality health care for women with multiple morbidities (e.g., a combination of several chronic mental and somatic disorders). This chapter provides a succinct overview of the most common somatic conditions in women with mental disorders and focuses on important opportunities for care improvement linked to appropriate and timely detection and treatment of physical health problems for women with serious mental disorders.

In Part II of this text, *Selected Disorders* (Chaps. 6–10), the authors discuss specific mental disorders that are unique or of particular concern to women, including

depression and postpartum disorders (Chap. 6—Flynn), eating disorders (Chap. 7—De Bate, Blunt, and Becker), menopause (Chap. 8—Wroolie and Holcomb), substance abuse (Chap. 9—Barry and Blow), and HIV/AIDS (Chap. 10—Frank, Knox, and Wagganer). In addition to discussing the relevant epidemiologic information, the authors provide thorough reviews of the current research and best practices regarding effective treatment and prevention strategies that must be adapted to ensure these strategies work for all women. The authors of the chapters appearing in Part II also discuss the importance of advocacy and involving women in policy development for prevention, care, treatment, and research concerning mental disorders.

Part III of this text, *Services Delivery and Emerging Research* (Chaps. 11–20) covers topics specifically selected to be complementary with each other. The authors of each chapter integrated relevant and current information to illustrate the complex interaction of the different aspects of services delivery and emerging research. The combination and wealth of information provided in Part III of this text provides a clear understanding of the strengths and challenges facing current services delivery systems and the potential impact of emerging research on future systems of care. Part III is composed of chapters covering diverse topics critical to research and the effective provision of mental health services for women.

In Chap. 11, Merrick and Reif address the insurance and financing mechanisms and approaches to quality improvement by analyzing the organization, financing, and delivery of women's mental health services in the current managed care environment. In Chap. 12, Perez, Dixon, and Kelly explore the impact of evidence-based medicine on the quality of mental health services provided to women. Veysey (Chap. 13) presents the specific mental health service needs of women who are incarcerated in US jails. The chapter documents the magnitude of this significant problem and discusses in detail the need for trauma-informed mental health services for incarcerated female populations.

In Chap. 14 (Dugan and Magley), Chap. 15 (Bloom), and Chap. 16 (Mulder, Jackson, and Jarvis) the authors examine the workplace, organization stress, and mental health services for women living and working in rural America. The authors of these chapters also discuss ways in which these settings may support or hinder accessing treatment at the community level for mental disorders.

In Chap. 17, Burke-Miller examines other social and community contexts for women's mental health. Jang, Chiriboga, and Becker (Chap. 18) present information on racial and ethnic disparities and emphasize the importance of cultural, social, economic, and geographic factors commonly associated with unique behavioral presentations that require culturally appropriate, multidimensional, and interdisciplinary responses. Burke-Miller reminds readers of the relevance of race and ethnicity and place to practice, policy, and establishing future research agendas.

In the final two chapters in this text, Nicholson (Chap. 19) and Hanson and Levin (Chap. 20) explore topics frequently missing in prior literature on women's mental health. In Chap. 19, Nicholson provides an ecological perspective on parenting and recovery for mothers with mental disorders and describes these mothers, their

experiences, and needs. She extrapolates from the existing literature key components and processes of relevant interventions for mothers and their implications for mental health policy and services delivery. In the last chapter of this text (Chap. 20), Hanson and Levin present critical information on how best to navigate the diversity of knowledge that constitutes women's mental health. The authors also discuss the implications that emerging technologies and information-seeking behaviors have on women's mental health research, services delivery, and policy.

Although space does not permit an examination of all relevant topics and issues in women's mental health, this text emphasizes the importance of establishing a public health perspective for the study of women's mental health. We hope that this multidisciplinary framework will assist individuals from various disciplines to join in future research, services delivery, and policy making efforts in women's mental health.

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