

Letter to the Editor
Review of *Community Psychiatry*,
edited by Andrzej Cechnicki and Jacek Wciórka,
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The long-awaited *Community Psychiatry*, edited by Professors Andrzej Cechnicki and Jacek Wciórka – renowned experts on issues related to the community and social context of psychiatry – is a publication of exceptional importance at a time when Polish psychiatry is on the verge of profound reform and significant changes.

It is widely believed that community psychiatry is an approach to psychiatric treatment that places particular emphasis on limiting the treatment of mental disorders in hospital settings and on the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care in favor of so-called community care, which is based on local, smaller medical centers (e.g., community treatment teams) and allows patients to receive psychiatric care in the social environment, including their family and professional environment, in which they function on a daily basis. Community psychiatry emphasizes the importance of maintaining and supporting patients' ability to fulfil the social roles appropriate to healthy individuals; in terms of psychotherapy, it is based primarily on a systemic approach. Such a broad approach to psychiatric treatment also allows us to conclude that the way in which help is provided to people suffering from mental illness can be considered a measure of the maturity of the local community and society as a whole. It reflects individual, group, and institutional attitudes towards the inevitable, though sometimes troublesome, presence of such people among us. The experiences of many countries suggest that the community-based model of care has many benefits – it promotes accessibility, facilitates equal access, and achieves good effectiveness. It also facilitates respect for the dignity of those it seeks to help. It is widely believed that the transition from asylum-type care to community-based care represents progress, but it is not easy. It requires an understanding of the essential features of community care, the will to implement them, and the creation of the necessary organizational solutions. All of the above issues are addressed and discussed in the reviewed publication.

The reviewed book contains a broad, multidimensional and comprehensive approach to mental health issues, with contributions from thirty highly competent specialists in the field of psychiatric healthcare. This determines the exceptional cognitive and practical value of the book: the authors of the individual chapters address a number of key issues related to providing assistance to people experiencing a mental crisis, and then recovering and regaining their social, professional, and family competences. The recovery process is a complex and complicated undertaking, requiring the cooperation of many institutions – not necessarily medical ones – and is only possible when patients are fully empowered and their rights and needs are taken into account.

The book is a comprehensive study covering both issues directly related to mental health recovery and the broader social context of this process. In total, the work consists of 15 chapters, edited with great care and referring to a wide range of the latest literature on the subject. The individual chapters discuss, in turn, **the very concept of community psychiatry**, gradually expanding its scope and content to the extent of community mental health care. Considerable attention is devoted to **the social context of psychiatry**, the value of trust, understanding and communication, the experience of freedom, and the role of cooperation, integration and coordination of efforts to help. **A new theory of multidimensional recovery was also presented, closing the era of one-sided endogenous determination, as well as practical actions and good practices for recovery orientation.** The issue of the burden and stigma imposed on individuals, functions, and institutions active in psychiatric care was also analyzed in detail. The sources of its dysfunction and moral missteps or failures in its centuries-long history and challenging current situation were also described.

The issues of systemic community psychiatry practice and the organizational forms of community psychiatric care were subjected to in-depth analysis, with an emphasis on healthcare and social support. The difficult realities of community psychiatric care reform, including community care reform for children and adolescents and community care reform for adults, are not overlooked. A separate chapter is devoted to mental health promotion (education, employment, family life, social activity, staff training) and the prevention of mental disorders. The role, tasks, practice, and difficulties of interdisciplinary teams, which are taking over and developing the role traditionally assigned to clinicians in community psychiatry, are also taken into account.

Of particular importance is the chapter covering interventions and therapies useful at various stages of crisis and recovery, from initial contact, through emergency procedures, short – and medium-term therapy, to the difficult tasks of long-term therapy. The challenges and tasks of modern psychopharmacotherapy in community care are also addressed, with a clear emphasis on the inseparability of pharmacotherapy and psychological therapy. The topic of social support is also analyzed, with attention paid to the importance of individual social networks, processes, and activities aimed at strengthening independence, self-efficacy and self-control. The need for and solutions related to life cycle stages (childhood, adulthood, ageing), existential burdens (disability, dependence, homelessness, migration, minority identity) and specific health burdens (difficult experiences, non-psychotic and psychotic disorders), which community support should be prepared to address. One of the more difficult problems

of community support, related to risk management in threatening situations due to behaviors such as resignation from life, aggression, agitation or disorganization, was also taken into account. The book concludes with comments on the use of tele-tools in community practice.

The chapter discussing reform activities and proposals in Poland is very important and timely. The book also includes a translation of the work by the legendary **Norman Sartorius**, who draws attention to the global, civilizational development trends at the turn of the century, marked by economic crises, unstoppable urbanization, commercialization of human relations, stratification of access to information and prosperity, the disappearance of communities and the crisis of the family, which overlap and threaten the implementation of community psychiatry.

As can be seen from the above content, comments, and considerations, the book takes into account all possible aspects, contexts and perspectives that are important in describing the role that community psychiatry plays in contemporary society, especially in dealing with people experiencing mental crises. This fact allows us to conclude that in the history of Polish scientific literature on the subject, it is difficult to find publications that are even minimally comparable to the reviewed book. It is simply the first and so far the only textbook on community psychiatry.

I believe that the work of both editors of the reviewed book deserves a particularly positive assessment. They had an extremely difficult editorial task to perform, which involved standardizing several dozen texts from 30 authors. This standardization concerned many aspects, such as terminological consistency, the separation of individual subchapters, and the linguistic correctness of the arguments. It should be emphasized here that both editors performed these tasks very well. The text of the entire book is very coherent, consistently edited, clear and correct in terms of both language and terminology. The division of the book into chapters and subchapters is also clear and coherent.

The book is a comprehensive study, and the multi-threaded and multi-dimensional nature of the discussed issues allows us to conclude that it is a complete study, covering all the important issues related to community psychiatry. It should also be emphasized that inclusiveness and interdisciplinarity are two concepts that best characterize contemporary community psychiatry, and which also served as guidelines for the Scientific Editors and Authors when writing the chapters. The book also shows that every mental health problem requires an individualized approach, taking into account the underlying biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors. The reviewed book presents the issues of community psychiatry in an interprofessional manner and is a compendium of systematic knowledge on the complex determinants of mental health and its recovery, as well as available therapeutic interventions.

The aforementioned multi-threaded and multi-dimensional nature of the discussed issues allows us to conclude that the book is a comprehensive work, covering all the relevant contexts related to mental crisis and the recovery process. As the editors of the volume emphasize:

We are convinced that the time has come to prepare and provide all potential mental health stakeholders with a monographic record of

observations, experiences, and research results concerning community psychiatry. We believe that it can be a source of helpful knowledge, an incentive to reflect, ask questions, and choose the expected answers. The interest shown by individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and state bodies justified the publishing initiative, especially in a situation where public authorities' decisions regarding the mental health care system are characterized by volatility, indecision, one-sidedness, and, unfortunately, often disregard for the voices of those directly affected by its operation. As you read these words, you hold in your hands the result of our efforts to meet this challenge.

There is no doubt that the handbook will be read not only by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, but also by all those involved in the recovery process: social workers and assistants, educators, rehabilitation specialists, and local government officials. It will also be of interest to patients themselves, who are looking for support and knowledge to help them understand their situation and enable them to participate actively and consciously in the recovery process.

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