

# Effective Psychological Interventions in Primary Care

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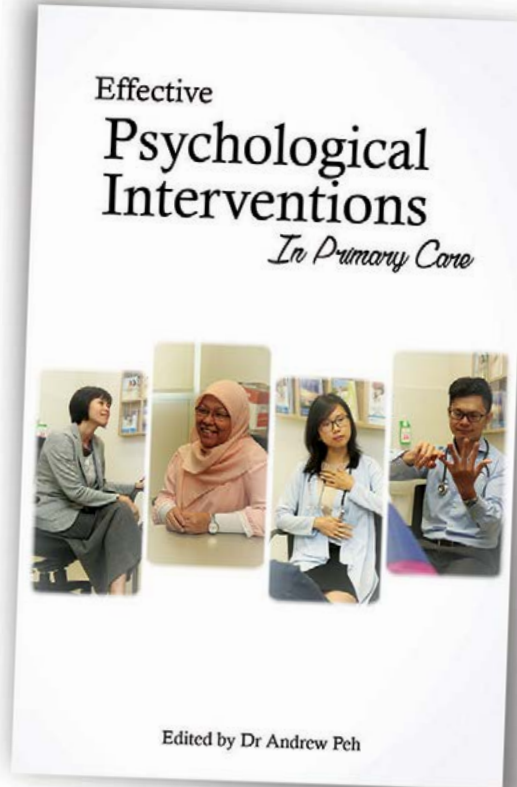
Primary care healthcare professionals or providers - which include doctors, nurses and allied - play a pivotal role in both the management of psychological illnesses and the promotion of happiness and mental well-being in the community. Unlike in the past where the tendency was to refer such patients to secondary care, the paradigm-shift today is towards "right-siting" of treatment in the community by primary healthcare providers.

This book is written by experienced authors of diverse background such as a psychiatry, clinical psychology and nursing. It is a small handbook which summarizes the current knowledge, concepts and practices of the larger field of non-pharmacological psychological medicine in primary care. They have done a good job in condensing the topics of supportive therapy, psycho-education, motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness & self-compassion, relaxation techniques and behavioral strategies to treat insomnia into a handy compendium of pocket size.

These topics were part of the Physician Burnout and Self-care Interventions skills course conducted in Jan 2016 by the authors, myself and the College of Family Physicians Singapore as part of the training of family doctors in building resilience in their professional practice and personal lives. Scholarly articles by the authors, which documented the evidence base of this book, were published by the authors in the January - March 2016 issue of The Singapore Family Physician.

During the last century in the United Kingdom, Michael Balint (1896 – 1970), who was a psychoanalyst, saw great value in the doctor-patient relationship in general practice (family medicine). He worked with general practitioners (the British phrase for "family physicians") in developing a process of brief psychotherapy he termed "focal psychotherapy". Balint introduced the concept of "the doctor as a drug" and emphasized the importance of the use of emotion and personal understanding in the doctor's work and the therapeutic potential of the doctor-patient relationship.

Hence, given the long tradition of GP's or family doctors in mental healthcare, it is unsurprising that the target audience of the book is largely family doctors. However, as the interventions described are non-pharmacological, it can be used equally effectively by non-medical healthcare professionals.



It is useful for both the beginner and the experienced since the concepts and interventions are introduced in an easy-to-understand fashion without the use of jargon. It uses abbreviated clinical vignettes to open the discussion at the start of each chapter. Concepts and exercises are based on these clinical cases. Senior readers will be relieved to know that the font size is large and the book is easy to read, even at bedtime.

The authors are part of the referral-based Health Wellness Program (HWP) under the Eastern Health Alliance. Many GPs have referred their patients to the HWP for psychological therapies and this is clearly reflected in the immediately use-able lessons and practical approach taken by the authors in this book.

However, since some patients are not keen to be referred to such services, this handbook offers sufficient current state-of-the-art knowledge to assist the GP.

Reading this book, one can see almost immediate benefit in one's personal life, patients and medical practice.

To receive a complimentary copy of the book, please email your request to [hwp@easternhealth.sg](mailto:hwp@easternhealth.sg)

## References (accessed 20 Jun 2016)

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