

## Book review: Oral health psychology

Oral health psychology

Editors: T. Willumsen, J. P. Å. Lein, R. C.

Gorter, L. Myran

Publisher: Springer, 2022

ISBN: 978-3-031-04248-5

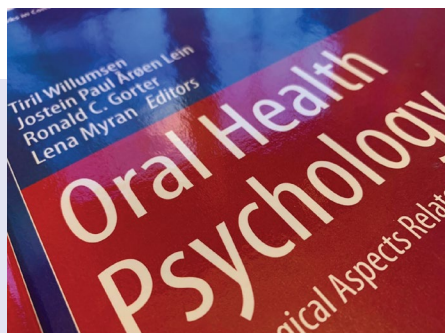
A research paper which I have been accessing included several citations to this book – it therefore seemed important to obtain and review the contents. The chapters contained within the book covered topics which appeared novel in relation to dental care.

Overall, I found the book very insightful. I did not always feel that the content had been written for the general dental practitioner, although this is the stated audience for the book. Using the AACODS critiquing checklist,<sup>1</sup> I feel confident in the authority, accuracy, contemporaneity and significance of the text, but have concerns regarding coverage and objectivity.

The opening chapter does not reflect the depth of content found elsewhere within the book, despite attempting to lay the groundwork of psychology for a general audience. I would place this book as an intermediate text, perhaps written for the qualified practitioner who has a developing interest in the psychological aspects of practice, although the text is accessible for an undergraduate who has a particular interest and some background knowledge on the topic.

Some difficult concepts are covered in great detail, including discussions about survivors of torture and abuse, and how dental care may interface with their life experiences. Chapters 17 (Child Sexual Abuse and Oral Health Challenges) and 18 (Providing Dental Care to Torture Survivors) made for difficult yet thought-provoking reading and challenged my perceptions. It shone a light on matters which are presumably discussed in hushed tones within private spaces. I feel a personal responsibility, as I think will every reader, to comprehend that possibility that the anxious patient in our chair may in fact have been a victim to much deeper, darker issues at some point in their life, and that this may be having a direct effect on their oral health.

One author suggests that the dental professional should consider themselves the counsellor rather than attempting to fulfil the role of psychologist. Meanwhile, NHS



England<sup>2</sup> has produced guidance on anxiety suggesting that the dental team member may wish to qualify as a psychotherapist or clinical psychologist in order to work with this population group. It also recommends the multiple-appointment therapeutic approach with a psychotherapist working alongside a dental professional for six sessions. Who is this guidance aimed at? How extensive is this provision? Who will fund it? One of the editors was involved in the extensive Norwegian government-commissioned TADA study. An extensive physical manual guide is in general use;<sup>3</sup> should our sights be set on translating and understanding this manual rather than relying on a webpage which leaves loose ends?

In conclusion, this book does not seek to be the authority in solving all matters of psychology in relation to dentistry. It does, however, provide some useful insights, highlights some of the ongoing work which is taking place globally, and outlines some emerging effective practices for the reader's consideration. I have taken note of the Dental CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) approaches underway, along with innovative approaches to exposure therapy that were described. Further discussion is needed about how general dental practice in the UK can adopt oral health psychology effectively.

**By Mark Thurston, registered dental nurse with a BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care Studies, Bristol, UK**

### References

1. Tyndall J. AACDOS Checklist. Flanders University, 2010. Available at: [https://www.library.sydney.edu.au/research/systematic-review/downloads/AACDOS\\_Checklist.pdf](https://www.library.sydney.edu.au/research/systematic-review/downloads/AACDOS_Checklist.pdf) (accessed March 2023).
2. NHS England. Clinical guide for dental anxiety management. p 18. 17 January 2023. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/clinical-guide-for-dental-anxiety-management/> (accessed March 2023).
3. Willumsen T, Myran L, Lein J P Å. *Odontologisk psykologi*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 2018.

## BDJ Team

Quality CPD  
for UK DCPs



Stay up-to-date!  
10 hours of FREE  
verifiable CPD

Check out:  
BDJ Team CPD 2023



[go.nature.com/  
TeamCPD23](https://go.nature.com/TeamCPD23)

CPD:  
TEN HOURS