

Emmatty, L.M. (2009). An insight into dementia care in India. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 119 pp. ISBN: 978-81-7829-8887

Reviewed by Jacqueline Parkes¹

Leena Mary Emmatty's 'An Insight into Dementia care in India' has emerged largely from two main sources of evidence, the conclusions drawn from her theoretical knowledge, and her personal encounters with caregivers during her pre-doctoral and doctoral studies while in India. Currently, a licensed Social Worker in America, Leena felt compelled to write the book after receiving positive feedback from the academic community about her research in this field. Her first study (Study I), undertaken while in Bangalore, Karnataka in 2000 looked at the burden of caring for a person living with dementia (PwD); and her second study (Study II) completed in 2003 which explored the personal and social support mechanisms adopted by primary carers in order to help maintain their own physical and mental wellbeing, whilst also providing daily care for their loved ones. Caring for someone diagnosed with a dementia can be very physically demanding and emotionally distressing; but in this book, the author endeavors to provide a plethora of helpful suggestions for interventions and approaches which may help to at least alleviate the effects of carer burden. These range from psychosocial interventions for the PwD and the carer, through to sources of informal community support and more formal support from NGOs.

Divided into five parts, the 'Introduction' sets the scene in relation to global ageing populations, the association with growing numbers of people being diagnosed with a dementia, and presents the focus of the text, which is caregiving practices in India. Part I offers a rather thin overview of the types (only three are mentioned), signs and symptoms, and possible causative factors for some dementias, neglecting to mention types which are more commonly associated with younger onset (aged under 65 years old), for example, fronto-temporal dementia. Later in this section, interesting research currently being undertaken in India into the prevalence of dementias does however address both younger and later onset. Part II explores a range of caregiving practices, and these are much more strongly and clearly located within the context of caregiving in India. Part III highlights the psychological distress and emotional burden associated with carer burden. Part IV explores the positive benefits of both psychosocial interventions and social support mechanisms for both the PwD and primary caregivers, which can help to reduce the level of expressed emotion and therefore carer distress. The final section highlights aspects of caregiving practices which may be worthy of further research, focusing on the need for additional

¹ Centre for Applied Mental Health Research, Institute of Health & Wellbeing, University of Northampton. (jacqueline.parkes@northampton.ac.uk)

training for health and social care professionals in delivering person-centred dementia care, and closes with a resume of the resources available to PwD and carers in India.

Having been invited to review this book, given my current work in the development and implementation of social support groups for PwD and their carers in the United Kingdom, I was keen to ascertain its relevance for alternative international contexts outside of India. Initially, I thought it might provide rich insights and descriptions in care giving practices within a very different cultural setting from my own western experience, which may prove valuable in my own relationships with individuals from an Indian background I encounter in my own daily practices in this field; after all, this is the text's unique selling point. And "yes", illustrations of dementia care experiences within Indian family and community networks do emerge sporadically throughout the book's pages, but these are not as prevalent as I would have indeed expected, given the early claim in the text to focus on this issue. We are first introduced to current Indian prevalence studies in Chapter 1. In Chapter 3, we finally learn more about Indian care giving practices, and how this information has been acquired via the author's own research; and in Chapter 10, the reader is presented with descriptions of the formal care pathways and services in parts of India. This significant contextual information I felt was too little too late, and perhaps could have been introduced much earlier in the text to help the reader to understand the cultural context of both informal and formal dementia care practices in India.

The book's strength for me lay in understanding that much of the evidence-base for the book's focus lay in the findings from the participants in the author's own studies. This particularly related to the intensity of carer distress, and the individual and support mechanisms available to assist with the provision of daily care. Part III provided some academic theoretical support (if a little dated on occasions) in the inclusion of Lazarus et al.'s theoretical coping model as the basis for problem focused and emotional focused coping strategies, but it may have been helpful to novice readers to have explained the 'Transactional Model of Coping' before suggesting how it might be applied in the context of care giving. The 'Social Support for Caregivers' section Chapter 7) was particularly beneficial in offering the reader with an evidence-base for the development and sustainability of social networks for both PwD and carers. The highlight for me, however, was the checklist for "things to look for when conducting a holistic assessment" in chapter 8, which is designed to provide professionals with a tool to 'equip [them] with further dimensions in therapy to enable needy families to deal with hardships effectively' (p.68).

On balance, the text only provides some useful, but brief, insights in dementia care in India, despite being its primary claim. It does, however, also present the novice learner with easily accessible descriptions of the nature of care giving in dementia care, irrespective of the culture in which the practice is taking place. It describes an extensive range of interventions which might be applied to alleviate, to varying degrees, the extent of carer burden. For the novice learner being introduced to the field of dementia care, this text will provide a starting point; however; for those who are reading expecting to discover more about care experiences in India, the ground was less fertile. It might have been more exciting to see and understand how these are being developed more specifically for PwD and their carers living

in India, than have yet more generic information about dementia care that is already extensively available from more eminent sources. The book claims to offer an “Insight into Dementia Care in India”, and it provides just that, an insight.