Book Review: Case Management

Di Gursansky, Judy Harvey, and Rosemary Kennedy. (2003). *Case Management.* Columbia University Press: New York.
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The straightforward title of this book belies the complexity and diversity of topics it so creatively addresses. *Case Management*, written by a trio of faculty from the University of South Australia, sets out to confront the "regional, disciplinary, professional and practice silos" which surround this practice method. In light of the authors' ambitious goal, it's fair to ask if their efforts are too superficial. Happily, the answer is a resounding "No!" Even attaching the phrase "policy, practice and professional business" to the title inadequately conveys the depth and breadth of this outstanding work. There is something here for any social work professional with an interest in understanding how a popular practice method finds its way into so many human service organizations.

Case Management consists of three major sections followed by a concluding chapter. It is helpfully organized to facilitate browsing by readers not interested in every aspect the authors deem significant.

The initial three chapters cover policy-related issues ranging from a historical overview of case management to its application in a variety of practice settings. For instance, Chapter 3 discusses some critical organizational dimensions as they apply to the design of a case management delivery system. This material will be especially helpful to program planners and managers as they consider how an agency goes about deciding who to target, how to acquire and allocate resources and how to confront accountability and autonomy demands posed by various constituents.

The middle third of the book examines how case managers representing a number of helping professions have carried out their roles and responsibilities. Throughout this section, the authors highlight how a managed care philosophy has affected the delivery of case management services, no matter how they are defined and articulated. Moreover, it was gratifying to read about so many of the important ethical issues surrounding case management. The challenge of selecting which clients to serve with static or declining resources initially is raised in Chapter 4, while Chapter 6 is devoted to a more complete discussion of ethical decision making.

The remaining section of this book addresses what is referred to as the "professional business" aspects of case management. Included here are chapters on the preparation, regulation, and professionalization of case managers. Interestingly, the authors have some harsh words about social workers and their struggle to lay claim to case management in light of the growing presence of nurses.

Rather than serving as a perfect fit for any single course in a Social Work curriculum, *Case Management* can help inform any number of content areas typically found in MSW and PhD programs. Ironically, it's probably least appropriate as a practice text and those readers unfamiliar with terms such as "service mix", "core technology", and "boundary spanning" might be tempted to overlook this book. However, they should be encouraged to look beyond what may appear, at first, to be off-putting jargon. For instance, the authors' treatment of Lipsky's "street level bureaucrats" is an insightful account of how case managers struggle to actually perform their jobs in fluid and often conflict-laden surroundings.

Finally, *Case Management* has extensive citations which cut across the social work, nursing, medical, and organizational/management literature. This reviewer hopes the authors are busy preparing a fascinating account of another human service technology.