

Outcome-Based Evaluation

by Robert L. Schalock; New York City, Plenum Press, 1995, 264 pages, \$35

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This textbook is comprehensive in its explanation of the hows and whys of program evaluation through outcomes measurement. The author, who is affiliated with Hastings (Nebr.) College, provides extensive detail about the design, creation, and implementation of outcomes studies and the analysis and reporting of outcomes data. He includes excellent guidelines that can be used without reading the entire text.

The author states that the text can be used by both "consumers" and "producers" of outcome data. The information is global enough for application in the fields of rehabilitation, mental health, and special education, to name a few. Yet the author explains (and I agree) that even following the painstaking steps included in the text provides no guarantee that what is measured isn't one of a countless number of internal and external variables that may be contributing to the patient's outcome. In addition, it is highly likely that the study will have its doubters and will not be as effective as one would expect.

The author tries to present the material with a personal touch, often writing in the first person, and he valiantly attempts to make the text user friendly. As a reference text, the book certainly measures up. Yet in its comprehensiveness it provides such extensive detail that it loses its effectiveness for working professionals.

The text may be best used as part of a master's- or doctoral-degree program. The study questions, summary, and additional readings at the end of each chapter make it ideal for a university environment. The working professional would also find it useful as a reference text for looking up various aspects of the process, or

as an evaluation tool when purchasing an off-the-shelf outcomes measurement package. The text would also be helpful in designing and creating an outcomes measurement tool. However, with the plethora of such tools that are on the market today and are supported by extensive research, I'm not sure why anyone would go to that trouble.

The mental health media are full of articles about the necessity of having an effective outcomes-based evaluation program, yet as an administrator I have yet to be approached by any payer or outside organization to provide outcomes data. The topic seems to fall into the same area as the economic credentialing of physicians (that is, credentialing doctors for a network based on how cost-effective their treatment is): it sounds like a good idea, but how is it to be done?

In today's cost-cutting environment, it is difficult to understand how an organization can accomplish outcomes-based evaluation cost-effectively. We can all agree that effectiveness analysis is good, and perhaps even necessary, in the 1990s. But with other more prevalent pressures for cost containment, it is hard to get excited about what is undoubtedly a daunting and expensive task.

MISCELLANY

The Rights of People With Mental Disabilities

by Robert M. Levy and Leonard S. Rubenstein; Carbondale, Illinois, Southern Illinois University Press, 1996, 370 pages, \$34.95 hardcover, \$13.95 paperback

One of a series of American Civil Liberties Union handbooks dealing with citizens' rights, this book is a revised and updated edition of *The Rights of Mental Patients* and *The Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons*,

both written in the 1970s. The authors note that the nature of the debate over rights has changed with the development of the self-advocacy movement and new concepts in the design and provision of services, such as those encompassed under psychosocial rehabilitation.

The authors use a question-and-answer format to address rights in six areas: involuntary commitment; procedures for admission and release; personal autonomy, informed consent, and the right to refuse treatment; the right to be free from discrimination; the right to treatment and services; and rights in everyday life in institutions and the community. A final chapter describes the legal system. The authors note that they focus primarily on what the courts and legislatures have recognized as rights but that they try to make clear what rights they believe ought to exist as well.

Mental Illnesses Awareness Guide for the Media, revised edition

American Psychiatric Association, August 1996, 40 pages, paperback. Single copies available free from APA's Division of Public Affairs, DPA Department PS-97, 1400 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Designed for use by journalists, this revised guide provides an overview of mental illnesses and treatment, information about illness prevalence and costs, a glossary, and an extensive list of resources. The guide can be offered to media contacts by public relations officers in psychiatric facilities and by psychiatrists who deal with the press.

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