

Book Review

Title: *A History of AIDS Social Work in Hospitals: A Daring Response to an Epidemic*

Editors: Barbara I. Willinger and Alan Rice

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Reviewer: J. Gary Linn, Ph.D., Professor, School of Nursing and Center for Health Research
Tennessee State University

A History of AIDS Social Work in Hospitals primarily targets Master's level social work students. It provides many varied first hand accounts of social workers' early and more recent responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States. However, it should also be of interest to scholars in public health, health policy, medical sociology, and nursing because it touches on clinical, organizational, policy, and community issues related to AIDS social work. This comprehensive collection of case histories is a unique contribution to our knowledge about the personal and organizational strategies developed by social workers in different parts of the country, e.g., New York, San Francisco, and South Carolina, to address the early epidemic. We learn about the Harper Model for social work with hospitalized AIDS patients from the inner city New York, the Social Work AIDS Network (SWAN) in San Francisco, and daily life in a southern AIDS service organization (ASO) during the 1980s. In response to confidentiality and safety concerns regarding clients of the Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services (PALSS) in South Carolina, the agency's location was not published during its first ten years of existence. Individuals who called for support services or to volunteer were verbally directed to the facility. HIV stigma was assumed to be rampant in the local community, and PALSS staff believed that it was not safe to inform the community of their address.

Each chapter of Willinger and Rice's book makes an interesting statement. The experience and frustrations of the frontline AIDS social workers during the past 25 years are described in exquisite detail. Early encounters of an adult infectious disease doctor and a pediatrician with AIDS patients in New York are told in poignant and sometimes humorous narratives. Moving stories of courageous struggles with HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination in the rural south are eloquently related. Added together, the 33 chapters document many facets of the early epidemic. The reader begins to get a sense of the enormous scope of HIV/AIDS issues and responses during that era.

Perhaps the most important contribution of Willinger and Rice's book is that it preserves in an organized framework the first experiences of AIDS social workers. Without this special history, much of this experience would be unrecorded and lost. Fortunately, we now have a wide range of case histories included in a single volume from which we can all learn.

No apparent effort has been made to make this book accessible to people with disabilities. Nevertheless, it is worth its \$40 price. I would recommend *A History of AIDS Social Work in Hospitals* to graduate social work students and to scholars in social work, public

health, health policy, medical sociology, and nursing. In fact, any reader wanting to become more informed about the most important health issues of our time would find this book interesting.