

BOOK REVIEW

Ted Karpf, Todd Ferguson, Robin Swift, Jeffrey V. Lazarus (eds)
Restoring Hope: Decent Care in the Midst of HIV/AIDS
United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

Restoring Hope: Decent Care in the Midst of HIV/AIDS addresses the often ill-defined concept of “decency in care” as it has been experienced in the HIV epidemic. In responding to HIV there has been significant resource mobilisation and technological development, but this is not necessarily equivalent to decency in care.

Instead, the preface explains how ‘decency’ has often been displaced by increasing technicalisation, medicalisation and stigmatising attitudes in HIV care. At their extreme, these attitudes deny dignity and basic rights to patients with HIV. The book also identifies that decency has been limited through the exclusion of people living with HIV from the design and implementation of HIV programmes and policies.

In contrast, the authors of this book describe decency as “an approach to health services which is holistic, inclusive and responsive to the community and which enrolls the community in the problem-solving and support for care”. The aspiration of the book is to restore the human face to the entire range of prevention, treatment, care and support services in HIV – in tandem with global efforts to achieve universal access to these services.

A major theme in this book is that decency is a unifying imperative amongst the diverse perspectives of many of the world’s belief traditions and systems. In particular, the book highlights the important role of faith in restoring decency to care. Somewhat ambitiously, the book draws together 24 experts from a diversity of backgrounds and beliefs. Each draws on the belief framework of their philosophy or faith to advocate a different approach to care that is based on decency. For example, Denise Ackermann sets out to produce what is essentially a well reasoned theology

of overcoming stigma. In addition to a justification from representatives from the major faiths, this book draws on philosophers, caregivers, physicians, nurses, people living with HIV and public health experts to describe the imperative to decent care.

The book could perhaps be criticized for privileging the perspective of faith in bringing about decent care. However, the authors would argue that this is appropriate given that the majority of those living with HIV live in countries where 30–70% of health care is undertaken by faith-based organizations. Yet to only illustrate faith interpretations that promote decency does risk idealism or romanticism. In defense of the book, a number of the authors acknowledge how some from their faith group have misinterpreted their faith – acting in ways that promote stigma and silence – and so failed to advocate decent care.

In summary, *Restoring Hope: Decent Care in the Midst of HIV/AIDS* provides excellent insight across faiths and philosophies into the rationale and definition of decency in care. This book fills a void in the literature in that it is perhaps the first book to provide a rationale for decent care that extends across most of the world’s major belief systems. This resource will be useful for those in the HIV/AIDS field who are attempting to promote decency in care in a range of socio-cultural and religious contexts.

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RESTORING HOPE

DECENT CARE IN THE MIDST OF HIV/AIDS

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