

## Book review

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



### **Beneath the White Coat: Doctors, Their Minds and Mental Health**

Edited by Clare Gerada  
Routledge. 2020. £22.99  
(pb). 305 pp. ISBN  
9781138499812

This book explores the growing mental health crisis among medical professionals, examining the secrecy surrounding this issue and highlighting the limited resources available to help. Although the style of the cover is suggestive of an academic textbook, the book is a much more personal collection of mini biographies, describing painful experiences that often felt too familiar.


The book is divided into four sections: ‘The making of a doctor’, ‘Doctors and their illnesses’, ‘Doctors as patients’ and ‘When things go wrong’. Each section is further divided into chapters and the authors of these address different issues regarding doctors with mental illnesses.

The enlightening stories they present are also a reminder that mental illness is still stigmatised in the 21st century. The authors remind readers that doctors are human and vulnerable to mental illness, and we should show the same attention, compassion and empathy to our colleagues as we do to our patients.

The book also examines some of the negative aspects of the medical profession, such as daunting medico-legal processes and poor coping methods, which can lead to painful emotional turmoil. It includes practical tools on how to approach these dilemmas, and I felt that reading about the experiences of other doctors may make readers in a similar situation feel less alone.

The accessible nature of this book will appeal to a wide audience, and it should be read by policymakers, medical directors, hospital managers and politicians. It is a stark reminder of the cumulative stressors that come with the doctor’s role and that it is imperative to ensure a safe and kind environment for doctors to be mentally healthy and able to speak out freely.

This book made me feel shocked and outraged, but also relieved that the authors have raised this issue. I hope that solutions are forthcoming.

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### Declaration of interest

None.