

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Sexual Exploitation of Patients by Health Professionals

REFERENCE: Burgess, A. and Hartman, C., *Sexual Exploitation of Patients by Health Professionals*, Praeger Publishers—Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881, 1986.

Ann Burgess and Carole Hartman have done an excellent job of organizing the materials provided by a wide range of professionals, each looking at this problem of sexual exploitation by health professionals from a unique perspective.

Each contributor bears witness to the incidence of sexual intimacy between therapists and patients; the vulnerability of patients as a result of the phenomenon of transference in treatment; and the almost universal complaint by patients of feeling used—even when they initiated the intimacy themselves.

The case histories presented are shocking. Still, there is a good reason for putting them on display in this book. Therapists who have never been sexually involved with patients can profit from the negative experiences of others. Patients seeking treatment can learn from other patients' experience that therapy promotes closeness and understanding, and in a sexual sense, presents a natural trap for unwary patients, as well as for therapists.

This book meets at least three objectives. It increases awareness that sex between patient and health professional is a fundamental betrayal of the sanctioned role of the provider. It highlights the complex strategies used by determined sexual offenders within their professions. It provides information regarding treatment efforts on behalf of sexually abused patients. Burgess and Hartman do more than simply point out the problem. They also propose individual and institutional guidelines for addressing and preventing patient sexual exploitation.

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