

Reviews

Compare A. (2012). *Relazione di coppia e malattia cardiaca. Clinica psicologica relazionale in psicocardiologia [Couple and heart disease. Clinical psychological relational psycho-cardiology]*. Milano: Springer-Verlag Italia.

Compare Angelo is a psychotherapist and professor of clinical psychology and dynamics at the University of Bergamo. In the first part of this book presents the interpersonal paradigm applied to cardiac risk giving the conceptual coordinates of the interpersonal domain. In the second part then introduces the applicative aspects illustrating the destruens (depression) and the costruens (empathy) and then illustrate the model evidence-based and Emotional Focused Couple Therapy (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988) applied to clinical practice with depressed cardiac patients. Finally, the third part presents an annotated literature.

Enrico Molinari, Professor of Clinical Psychology, Catholic University of Milan, in his introduction says, "... the volume is characterized by the proposed new possibilities for understanding and treatment of heart disease, trying to place them not only in the apparatus cardiovascular but also in the heart of the couple relationship, in agreement with the most recent developments of the reflections systemic-relational" (p. vi).

The bio-psycho-social paradigm (L'Abate, 2012) is the basis of the modern concept of health and disease and is the epistemological matrix of the corpus of recent studies in clinical psychology and health that connects to the paradigm of complexity. At its core, the different variables interact with each other in a nonlinear way, in a dynamic environment, influencing each other. The analysis of the scientific literature shows that in recent decades has increased the recognition of the psychological aspects as risk factors for physical health and in particular for the heart, as demonstrated by recent research published in professional journals. The attention to the relational context of onset and of course is a real novelty in the models of understanding and treatment of heart disease.

The couple's relationship, as characterized by emotional exchange and intense emotional involvement, is the relational context that plays a central role in the bio-psycho-social paradigm of heart disease. In clinical practice with patients suffering from heart disease, acute and chronic, it is common to observe how the disease may prove them to be the person who is affected and who share the link in the couple relationship. In this respect, the research (carefully analyzed in the third part of the book) shows that the morbidity and mortality rate is significantly lower in people who are placed in a functional relationship of the couple. Nevertheless, being in a couple relationship is not however a condition necessarily protective. Empirical evidence shows, in fact, like a dysfunctional couple's relationship, as well as representing a significant source of stress, promotes social isolation and maintenance of depressive symptoms. Depression is an important risk factor for various psychological and physical pathologies, in particular for heart disease. In fact, depressive symptoms, associated with altered cardiovascular functions, endocrine and immunological, tend to increase the risk of recurrence and mortality. Based on these findings, it could be argued that heart disease, such as traumatic event, urges the couple's relationship, highlighting the quality of the bond.

The author conducted a longitudinal research study on the couple relationships in cardiac patients lasted three years, accompanied by clinical experience in the diagnosis and treatment of psychological symptoms associated with heart disease. All this effort represented the starting point in order to write the book, also supported by an extensive review of the literature and the most recent developments in cardiology.

The course of the book offers a convincing and well documented path. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate heart disease as the leading cause of death in the world: people die each year due to a heart condition in a higher percentage than any other cause. It has been estimated that by 2030, mortality from heart disease will hit 23.6 million people. The behavioral factors appear responsible for 80% of coronary heart disease and cerebro-vascular disease, the most important risk factor for heart disease is represented by unhealthy lifestyles (diet, reduced physical activity, smoking). The psychological condition of the patient, and especially depression, is the main determinant of behavioral factors related to therapeutic adherence and healthy lifestyles.

Clinical advances in cardiac surgery are confronted more and more with the complexity of the care of heart problem. The coronary artery bypass graft is one of the interventions that have improved the prognosis and life expectancy of cardiac patients. Nevertheless, the impact of coronary bypass on quality of life is negative and the level and duration of the depression

after the implant bypass appears to be predictive of recurrence rate and mortality. The research work has shown that the relationships with the partner play a central role when the cardiac patient has depression. In these cases, the type and quality of the couple relationship takes on a moderator or protecting heightening the risk of recurrence and mortality.

The focus on aspects of relationships with the partner require the researcher, who is studying cardiac patients suffering from depression, to assume a perspective attentive to the complexity of the phenomena. The individualistic approach of behavioral medicine (Feldman, 2012) did not help, as evidenced by the trend of international studies. Since 2000, the subject has been the focus of growing more attention from researchers in the context of the epistemology of complexity that seeks to integrate an analytical approach with a systemic approach. The Emotional Focused Couple Therapy seems positively to respond to this new research and intervention approach, as the author documents in the cap. 7.

There should also emphasize the meticulous analysis of the literature, which monitors 140 studies reporting on the results of six tables with details of: authors, year of publication, sample, relationship variables, other variables, methods, results. Table 1 deals with interpersonal relationships and cardiac reactivity (CVR) in healthy subjects (No. 25 studies). Table 2 deals with interpersonal relationships and heart disease (No. 8 studies). Table 3 concerns the relationship of the couple and cardiac reactivity (pairs non-clinical) (No. 8 studies). Table 4 deals with the relationship of the couple and heart disease (No. 37 studies). Table 5 refers to the marital functioning in couples with a depressed partner (No. 30 studies). Table 6 concerns elements of the couple's relationship as factors of risk/protective for depression (No. 31 studies).

No doubt the Compare's book is interesting and deserves to be read, studied, consulted by students, interns and professionals both of psychotherapy and cardiology.

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