



The Story of Nursing in British Mental Hospitals: Echoes from the Corridors (Routledge Key Themes in Health and Society)

Niall McCrae, Peter Nolan

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From their beginnings as the asylum attendants of the 19th century, mental health nurses have come a long way. This comprehensive volume is the first book in over twenty years to explore the history of mental health nursing, and during this period the landscape has transformed as the large institutions have been replaced by services in the community. McCrae and Nolan examine how the role of mental health nursing has evolved in a social and professional context, brought to life by an abundance of anecdotal accounts.

Moving from the early nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century, the book's nine chronologically-ordered chapters follow the development from untrained attendants in the pauper lunatic asylums to the professionally-qualified nurses of the twentieth century, and, finally, consider the rundown and closure of the mental hospitals from nurses' perspectives. Throughout, the argument is made that whilst the training, organisation and environment of mental health nursing has changed, the aim has remained essentially the same: to develop a therapeutic relationship with people in distress.

McCrae and Nolan look forward as well as back, and highlight significant messages for the future of mental health care. For mental health nursing to be meaningfully directed, we must first understand the place from which this field has developed. This scholarly but accessible book is aimed at anyone with an interest in mental health or social history, and will also act as a useful resource for policy-makers, managers and mental health workers.

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