

Balint Groups – Theory and Application

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The reviewed book about Michael Balint is dedicated for readers who are professionals. It is a particularly valuable publication in the present Ukrainian reality. First and foremost, it meets the need for non-standard activities, the need for a more humanistic understanding of doctors' profession, the need to cascade skills which enable general practitioners, therapists and psychiatrists to better understand their patients. The demand for such knowledge and know-how is growing very rapidly. Moreover, due to the common involvement of medical staff in the process of rehabilitation of people with war traumas and their families, the risk of negative consequences of the performing medical professions and exposure to professional burnout have now become more serious health threats than ever before.

The methods used in the Balint group work show that feelings and fears of medical professionals follow certain patterns and rules. Their group analysis allows a more effective prevention of burnout syndrome and improves the contacts with patients. Participation in Balint group sessions is a preventive measure which brings effects not only in the scope of the doctor – patient relationship but also in the everyday functioning of doctors. It is worth remembering that Michael Balint was a follower of Sandor Ferenczi whose work has a special place in the stream of psychoanalytical concepts and techniques. The uniqueness of Balint's method lies in its humanistic nature and development of empathy for the patient. Balint's method is characterised by a kind of psychoanalytical 'protestantism' the core of which is that doctor sympathises with the patient by showing them a high level of tolerance and a maximum understanding of their subjective world. It would not be possible however without respect for feelings which doctors and psychotherapists often experience in contacts with difficult patients. That is precisely the topic of this book by our Polish colleagues to which Ukrainian enthusiasts of Balint movement - Wladyslaw Gazolishin and Olga Ryshkovska – contributed their experience. Thanks to efforts made by Wladyslaw Gazolishin and support of professor Bohdan Wasilewski – without exaggeration, one of the greatest humanists among our Polish colleagues - we have an opportunity to join the group of professionals practicing Michael Balint's method by using his ideas and unusual approach to work with difficult patients – the method that has been used in Western medicine for many years. I wish all the readers that they learn and make use of information contained in this book as soon as possible in order to develop a more tolerant and open approach based on a professional self-criticism and to widen their own horizon.

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