

Effective Correctional Treatment

Robert R. Ross & Paul Gendreau

EFFECTIVE CORRECTIONAL TREATMENT

compiled and edited by

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Dedicated to those correctional workers who, in spite of the proclamations of purveyors of the "nothing works" doctrine, have persisted in providing effective services to their clients.

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Preface

Over the past decade the criminal justice field has been infected with a pervasive negativism promulgated by academicians who proclaim that, in correctional rehabilitation, "almost nothing works". Practitioners in corrections have been "treated" to many critical reviews of the literature on the rehabilitation of offenders which have concluded with a denunciation of the view that treatment of the offender is an effective or appropriate response to criminal behavior. The conclusion that treatment does not work has been widely endorsed.

We recently drew attention to a body of literature virtually ignored by the cynics which demonstrates that some programs *do* work and have been found to do so in research studies with a methodological rigor which matches the best that applied behavioral science has offered in any area. We reviewed the literature published between 1973 and 1978 and found a substantial number of correctional treatment programs whose effectiveness had been demonstrated through studies which employed at least quasi-experimental designs and statistical analysis of outcome data. They provide convincing evidence that some treatment programs, when they are applied with integrity by competent practitioners to appropriate target populations, can be effective in preventing crime or reducing recidivism.

We were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm which we encountered when we presented this evidence to correctional workers. In retrospect, we think that we struck a responsive chord by providing hope for criminal justice practitioners that their efforts may not be entirely in vain. In spite of the "nothing works" dogma, treatment and counseling continue to be among the mainstays of correctional programming. Some correctional practitioners may be doing something worthwhile.

In this book we present *some* of the best of the effective programs which have been conducted since 1973. In order to be included, a program must have been conducted within an experimental or quasi-experimental design, must have included follow-up assessment of delinquent or criminal behavior, and must have provided a statistical evaluation of outcome data. Accordingly, our collection is by no means exhaustive or even representative of correctional treatment programs which may be judged "successful" by less stringent criteria. Moreover, since the majority of treatment programs in corrections are provided without a scientific evaluation component, we do not claim that the

programs included in this book depict the general state of the art of treatment in corrections. We are not blind to the fact that many treatment efforts not only have failed but have had deleterious effects. We acknowledge the criticism of those who will be dismayed by our exclusion of programs that have failed and will decry our presentation of an apparently one-sided picture of correctional treatment. So be it. The failures have had their share of attention. This book represents a plea for equal time for the successes.

The programs we present in this book provide testimony to the conclusion that correctional rehabilitation is possible. But we must emphasize that we do not offer panaceas. No program is touted as the final answer. No program is recommended for *all* offenders. Instead, throughout the book we urge the reader to pay careful attention to interaction effects: the outcome of each and every program will depend on a host of factors including the type of offender, the type of treatment, the nature of the treatment setting, the characteristics of the practitioners, the intensity of their treatment efforts, the program goals, and the nature of the post-treatment environment, among others.

Our review of the correctional treatment literature from 1973 to 1978, "Bibliotherapy for Cynics", is presented in Chapter 1 as an introduction to this book. It describes recent evidence of the effectiveness of correctional treatment, examines some of the fallacies inherent in the "nothing works" doctrine, and suggests five reasons for the apparent failure of some programs: reliance on a single method of treatment; reliance on a single measure of outcome; failure to examine interactions among treatment method, type of offender and type of setting; failure to adhere to the principles of the treatment modality in its application (or to provide *enough* treatment); and failure to integrate community resources with the treatment program.

Some of the program reports referred to in our review appear as chapters herein. In order to provide more recent findings, wherever possible these reports have been updated by the authors or by the editors. Many of the chapters are original articles which have been prepared expressly for this book. Some of the chapters describe new programs which were not discussed in our literature review. These new materials provide important support for the conclusions we reached in that review. They also demonstrate that both the quality of treatment and the quality of research have greatly improved in recent years.

Most of the programs described in this book are based on a social learning approach to the treatment of the offender. None are derived from the much maligned "medical" or "disease" model.

"Requiem for a Panacea", the second chapter in the introductory section, highlights the folly of what has been a long-time preoccupation of correctional treatment practitioners and critics alike: the search for cure-alls. Through a review of behavior modification programs in corrections this article demonstrates the naivete both of the expectation that a particular treatment regimen, which happens to be "in vogue", should be uniformly effective

across the correctional spectrum (from community to institution) or for all correctional goals (control vs. rehabilitation). It points out that the principles of many otherwise valuable intervention approaches can readily be compromised by the reality of some correctional settings with the result that programs become treatment in name only: “pacification programs disguised as treatment programs” (Griswold, p. 238). Too often treatment programs have “failed” because their practitioners naively thought they could transform fortress prisons into hospitals and later found to their dismay that “treatment” merely consisted of enlightened professional-scientific appearing masquerades covering up neglect.

Too often efficacious treatment modalities have been rejected because programs in that name have failed in some applications. The search for panaceas has fostered totally unrealistic expectations for correctional programming. The reality of corrections can quickly translate unwarranted optimism into nihilism. As “Requiem for a Panacea” demonstrates, the apparent failure of correctional programs should engender reflection not mere cynicism. Failure can be educational.

In Chapter 3, “Treatment Destruction Techniques”, Michael Gottfredson presents an insightful and powerful attack on the logic of the “nothing works” argument. He does so in a laconic, tongue-in-cheek style by providing a training manual complete with script for those who wish to bolster their criticism of correctional treatment by pseudoscientific arguments.

The principles, techniques and results of twenty-three effective treatment programs are presented in individual chapters in five sections: (1) diversion programs, (2) intervention with the families of delinquents, (3) community-based programs for juvenile offenders, (4) programs for juveniles in correctional institutions, and (5) programs for adult offenders. Clearly there is considerable overlap among these categories. Rather than providing an introduction for each section we preface each chapter with editorial comments designed to emphasize important findings or implications of each program or to provide additional references.

Effective Correctional Treatment is intended to serve as a text for courses in criminology, corrections, social work, and psychology, and as a sourcebook for personnel and volunteers in correctional agencies who are responsible for counseling offenders.

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Part I

**Introduction: Nothing
Works?**

Chapter 1

Effective Correctional Treatment: Bibliotherapy for Cynics*

Paul Gendreau & Robert R. Ross

INTRODUCTION

As long as personal suffering has a future, so does the search for different means of coping with it. (London, 1969, p. 201)

The criminological literature is replete with reports attesting to the view that correctional treatment is a failure (Conrad, 1975; Lipton Martinson & Wilks, 1975; Martinson, 1974; Wilks & Martinson, 1976). Conflicting opinions have been expressed (Chaneles, 1976; Halleck & Witte, 1977; McDougall, 1976; Palmer, 1975; Quay, 1977; Serrill, 1975; Smith & Berlin, 1977) and while the debate still rages, there appears to be a widespread endorsement of the view that in correctional rehabilitation “nothing works”.

At the risk of adding more fuel to a debate which may have generated more heat than light, we wish in this paper to appeal the conviction that “nothing works” by presenting some new evidence.

*Portions of this paper have been presented at symposia on correctional treatment programs held at the University of Moncton, New Brunswick, October 1977; Psychological Services Division of the Canadian Penitentiary Service, Ottawa, Ontario, May 1978; National Parole Services, Winnipeg, Manitoba June 1978; and Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, June 1978.

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