

Psychiatry PRN: Principles, Reality, Next Steps

Sarah Stringer, Laurence Church, Susan Davison & Maurice Lipsedge (eds)
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When teaching psychiatry most would agree that it can be a challenge to motivate and inspire undergraduates to learn about the intricacies of mental illness, a task further confounded by the often dry, humourless and monotonous books which are currently available. What is required is a text that gives undergraduates not only what that they want – help with passing exams – but also what they need – core knowledge of common mental illnesses, and how to recognise and treat them in the real world. This is exactly what the authors of *Psychiatry PRN* aim to do. Have they succeeded? In a word, yes.

With the clever use of famous cases, references to art and quotes from well-known literature to illustrate particular mental illnesses, one is drawn into each chapter. The book starts out, as expected, with how to undertake a psychiatric assessment, using Vincent van Gogh as an example; his is a life story that draws the reader in, and goes some way to illustrate how important history is in psychiatry.

The layout of the chapters is innovative, starting with MCQ questions to test initial knowledge, with answers provided online. The authors then go on to the 'principles' of a

given mental illness, the 'reality' about how to deal with affected patients (e.g. useful screening questions) and finally, 'next steps' – how to use this knowledge in a working environment.

The level of information is appropriate for a medical undergraduate, with tips for OSCEs included. However, what is unique is that the authors embrace the fact that knowledge could and should be gained from sources other than the book, for example poetry, fiction, music and film, and they provide sources after each chapter for further exploration. Despite this, there are important aspects of care the authors tend to skim over. For example, electroconvulsive therapy, an often life-saving treatment, is relegated to a paragraph and only minimally explored.

Nevertheless, we would strongly recommend this book to any undergraduate student. It is easy to read, provides knowledge at a suitable level and is unique in that not only does it offer insight on a clinical level, but also looks at how a disease can affect the patient and the doctor. We only wish this book had been available when we were students.

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