

Foster asked him which nurse he was referring to, he replied that it could have been any of the three on duty.

Foster's thesis, which the book title reflects, is that:

'Clients use their own experience to describe, define and make sense of mental health problems in general, and that their definitions also change and develop as the client's experience changes and develops, and as they interact with other individuals'.

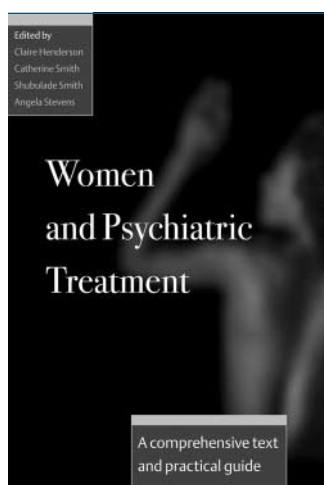
Hence her metaphor of a journey. Her conclusion is that:

'suffering from a psychosis does not negate that client's beliefs about his or her own mental health and treatment'.

I endorse this statement emphatically and urge you to read this book if you doubt it. The structure of the book is much more that of a research dissertation than a narrative, and I would have welcomed a much greater proportion spent on users' own words and reflections. However, Foster does us a service by flattening the professional hierarchy and allowing us the always enlightening, and sometimes chastening, experience of hearing what our clients think of us and our treatments.

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### **Women and Psychiatric Treatment: A Comprehensive Text and Practical Guide**

Edited by Claire Henderson, Catherine Smith, Shubulade Smith & Angela Stevens. Routledge. 2006. 352pp. £39.95 (hb). ISBN 0415213940

The editors of this book aim to provide a comprehensive text and a practical guide to psychiatric treatment for women. These aims were, in my view, only partially met, although overall this text is a useful addition to the growing literature in this field. Interest in the treatment of women with mental health problems and the specific issues that relate to those women has grown in recent years. It has been subject to considerable discussion and the Department of Health's review and documentation.

Many areas covered by this book are not only important but also enlightening. Women who use psychiatric services often have multiple and complex needs. Unfortunately, issues of gender-specific assessment, treatment and risk management have frequently been overlooked in the development of those services and as a result the specific needs presented by women are often not met.

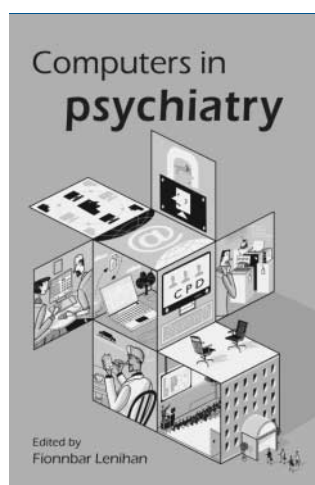
In 23 chapters, the 29 contributors cover background information, treatment settings, particular groups, specific disorders and therapies. The thought-provoking chapter on forensic settings has much to offer to those working in less secure environments. A number of the chapters covering specific disorders are thorough and informative, although this does not apply to all. Interestingly,

the section addressing the management of the sequelae of trauma covers borderline personality disorder and self-harm, although in general, the book focuses on mental illness rather than all forms of mental disorder. While some of the specific issues more frequently faced by women, such as domestic violence, are considered, other areas, for example in specific treatments, do not receive significant emphasis. As would be expected with any multi-authored book, the style and quality of writing varies and at times this becomes frustrating, particularly when referencing is poor. Some chapters provide only anecdotal accounts, while others provide excellently referenced and evaluated consideration. I believe the text would have benefited from the adoption of a more consistent approach and perhaps clearer guidance or stronger editing.

In my view, the editors have produced an important book; however, its quality would have improved if they had not attempted to cover such a wide range of topics, or conversely, if they had been more ambitious and produced a larger, more comprehensive text. *Women in Psychiatric Treatment* has something to offer to many readers, although I feel it may disappoint those with more specialist involvement in this field.

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### **Computers in Psychiatry**

Edited by Fionnbar Lenihan. Gaskell. 2006. 222pp. £22.50 (pb). ISBN 19046712171

The reviewer's task is to evaluate whether the author's promise in the preface, namely, 'to provide the tools needed for effective use of computers in clinical psychiatry', is fulfilled by the book. We shall see shortly. This book is a multi-author effort, condensing 222 pages of text and illustrative diagrams into 15 orderly chapters. The reader is gently taken from the very basic material such as choosing a computer, to gradually more meaty concepts.

The initial chapters introduce the reader to basic principles such as components, different types of computers, operating systems and the main considerations in purchasing a computer. Chapters 3 to 6 offer extensive instruction in the use of the common software packages that a psychiatrist might use to support their work producing letters/reports, clinical presentations, compiling and managing databases and producing audit reports, among others. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the use of statistical programs and organisational tools and would make helpful reading for anyone interested in research.

Chapters 10 and 11 discuss internet use and electronic communication and are detailed enough without being too

technical. They provide useful links to various web resources for finding, using and disseminating clinically useful information. The next two chapters discuss important legal and security issues to prevent these useful professional tools turning into a legal and disciplinary nightmare. Chapter 14 is a very interesting description of health information systems, a very topical issue indeed with the current debate about the National Health Service-wide patient information system. Psychiatrists need to be aware of these issues because of our direct role in using these systems and providing feedback to developers and administrators.

Any gripes? The introductory chapters assume prior technical knowledge without which terms such as modem and ISP could flummox the novice. An introduction, a glossary and a discussion of other operating systems was required. Chapter 2 is too brief and omits specifics such as connectivity and the weighting one should

give to hardware components in buying a computer. For example, it would be helpful to have a suggestion of the minimum RAM required for the efficient running of the common software packages.

Overall, this is a very good and useful book, well-written in a light, discursive style and amply illustrated with useful diagrams and screenshots. It should be a useful addition to any psychiatrist's library (and that of other clinicians too!) and we would heartily recommend it

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