

textbook was not available at the time I took my exams.

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Atlas of Psychiatric Pharmacotherapy

By R. Shiloh, D. Nutt & A. Weizman. London: Martin Dunitz. 1999. 235 pp. £49.95 (hb). ISBN 1-85317-630-3

Some people (usually males) have superior visuo-spatial abilities. Such men excel at map-reading, a skill at which women are allegedly abysmal. Those of either gender who delight in maps will enjoy this book. Those with predominantly linguistic tendencies may feel like a hippocampised rat lost in a maze.

The book, by title and aim, is an atlas "written ... for the clinician required to know, understand, and decide efficiently about options for biological treatments". It contains a series of intracellular road maps depicting not only the main highways travelled by psychotropic drugs but also the smaller roads and footpaths, some of which peter out, ending in "unknown cellular mechanisms". These maps are ingenious, intricate but difficult. They follow the route, for example, of an antidepressant drug from a serotonin receptor through many stages to its effect on "cAMP response element binding protein (CREB) and the 'proper production' of 'brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF)'" , leading finally to resolution of the depressive state. It is doubtful whether many psychiatrists will penetrate this far into the jungle. However, the maps, with their densely written texts, could be valuable for research workers requiring detailed information, and may serve as a reference for clinicians to absorb at leisure. Students and trainees would do better to start with something simpler.

Other maps, more easily followed, include flow charts of treatment strategies and grids of adverse drug effects. The former are available from other sources, but this book has the merit of stating how firmly evidence-based are the strategies suggested. Nevertheless, the text requires close searching for important clinical information such as dosage titration, dosage in the elderly and individual metabolic differences. Withdrawal reactions

from antidepressants or antipsychotics are not mentioned among adverse effects, although the flow charts advise slow tapering of dosage on withdrawal (no reason given). Readers may disagree with various items such as the statements that withdrawal reactions occur "only if stopped quickly" for several short half-life benzodiazepines and are "relatively insignificant" with zopiclone.

These are perhaps minor criticisms considering the wealth of information the book contains, and its wide coverage spanning basic pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics, drug interactions, drugs of misuse, sexual dysfunction, personality and eating disorders and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. The authors deserve congratulations for their originality and courage in presenting in black and white (and colour) their micro- and macroscopic perspectives on an extremely complicated subject. This book is a must for the library.

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Prenatal Exposures in Schizophrenia

Edited by Ezra S. Susser, Alan S. Brown & Jack M. Gorman. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press. 1999. 261 pp. US\$36.50 (hb). ISBN 0-88048-499-3

If you attend an annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), you are faced every day with a bewildering array of symposia, plenary sessions, workshops, posters and so on. More often than not you make the wrong choice and that evening at some social function you are told about the session you 'really should have attended'. The APA must be aware of this because it now produces the 'Progress in Psychiatry Series' which publishes 'the best of the symposia'. This book is number 56 – clearly the APA is on to a good thing (Royal College please note).

Although it is not clear in the introduction, I presume this symposium was organised by Dr Ezra Susser of Columbia University in New York. There are only nine chapters, but six come from his department. The book is really an extension of his already published work, which argues forcefully for the role of prenatal factors in the aetiology of schizophrenia.

Nowakowski from New Jersey sets the scene with a useful description of normal prenatal brain development (but why is this Chapter 3?). Waddington *et al* from Ireland review especially their own work that suggests a 'cascade process' in which intrauterine events are associated in childhood with neuromotor and psychological abnormalities and in adulthood with the appearance of psychosis. But the core of the book is a description and expansion of Susser *et al*'s finding that in the Dutch famine at the end of the Second World War, those who were exposed as foetuses in the first trimester of pregnancy to the height of the famine, had a greater than expected chance of developing schizophrenia in adult life. Susser believes that prenatal nutrition may be an important risk factor in schizophrenia; his current work is taking this further by looking at specific micronutrients.

This is an intriguing finding. However, to the best of my knowledge it has not been replicated. There must be many other specific situations in which pregnant mothers are exposed to famine. Also, what about chronic severe malnutrition in a country such as India? If Susser is right, then why is the incidence of schizophrenia not demonstrably higher in that country; or is it that such children die before reaching adulthood?

What I am really trying to say, I suspect, is that in this book there is no chapter providing a counterbalance to the undoubted enthusiasm of Susser's group. If Professor Tim Crow had been invited to speak at the symposium, there might have been a real debate.

For me, interested in clinical research in schizophrenia, this book will provide a useful source of references; I suspect it is not for the general psychiatrist.

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Psychiatric and Behavioural Disorders in Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation

Edited by Nick Bouras. 1999. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 464 pp. £35.00. ISBN 0-521-64395-3

This excellent postgraduate textbook provides a broad critical appraisal of psychiatric and behaviour disorders in individuals

with developmental/learning disability. The key aim of the book is to link latest research findings with clinical knowledge to inform everyday practice. When I reviewed Nick Bouras' previous (1994) book five years ago, it was welcomed as a considerable step forward within the speciality of psychiatry of learning disability. This book has surpassed those earlier efforts and highlights the considerable progress that has been made in recent years.

The book is divided into five sections covering classification, diagnosis, treatment, service and specific conditions. This multi-profession book has brought together distinguished researchers and clinicians from Europe, USA, Canada and Australia, to produce a coherent and well-researched account of the subject. Each chapter is of a high standard.

The first section covers assessment and classification from a clear and sensible perspective without the need for a psychiatrist, except for the chapter on brain imaging. The next section reviews specific conditions and includes chapters on autism, behavioural phenotypes, self-injurious

behaviour and dementia. It is highly informative and gives a diversity of views from international leaders in those fields. The next section on diagnosis and psychopathology takes a developmental approach and will be appreciated by front-line clinicians for its practical perspective. I found the two chapters on psychopharmacology, although written from experiences in the USA, very useful when comparing UK practices. In the final section on services, the chapter on measuring the outcome of services discusses this complex issue in a very readable way. It is essential for the contemporary clinician to have a good grasp of this topic when considering the demands of clinical governance and evidence-based practice. It is encouraging to see the subjects of staff stress, training and the ongoing education of the multi-professional team addressed in this book. Services wanting to become high-quality providers in this field are very dependent on the skills and enthusiasm of the professionals and care staff, because of the vulnerability of people with developmental disabilities.

There are other postgraduate textbooks in the speciality which have appeared in recent years that are well written. However, this probably provides the most comprehensive perspective to date. Bouras states that recent advances in this speciality require regular documentation – so I do look forward to future editions.

My only inclusion would have been to add a list of key issues/findings at the end of each chapter for the busy clinician. This textbook is essential reading for the well-established professional who wishes to be brought up to date, and for the trainee wanting to gain new knowledge in the field. The book should be on the bookshelf of every departmental library.

Bouras, N. (ed.) (1994) *Mental Health in Mental Retardation. Recent Advances and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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