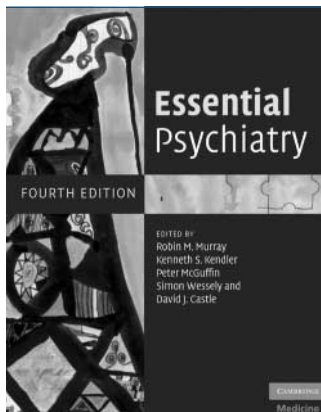


principles of operant conditioning and social learning (Skinner and Bandura are acknowledged influences, and Wolpe was an early collaborator). Although not avoiding issues of theory and service management, the book attempts to be more a practical manual than a textbook. In this Liberman is at least partially successful. A particularly good chapter on working with families would give any practitioner a degree of competence in this oft-discussed but in reality oft-avoided aspect of mental healthcare. Where treatments are sketched in, the reader is directed to resources commercially available from Psychiatric Rehabilitation Consultants, according to the website 'the dissemination site for the UCLA Psych REHAB program' (www.psychrehab.com).

Liberman's book stands out from the crowd in a number of ways. He is the only author to attempt to tackle the subject on his own, which allows his humanistic concern and deep commitment to alleviating the effects of mental illness on service users and carers to shine through, despite his occasional use of language that deviates from the politically correct. As the book's title indicates, Liberman is upfront about the 'd-word', disability: a word that has served in these socially inclusive and recovery-oriented times to make rehabilitation so very unfashionable. He has, uniquely among the fifty-odd contributors to the other recently published titles, the intellectual self-confidence to articulate concerns about the more glib formulations of the recovery movement, with the marvellously dismissive: 'Catchwords trump dry logic, dull evidence and mere facts'. This book is in a very real sense a monumental achievement, fruit of 40 years of active research and practice in what was and remains an undeservedly unfashionable field.

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Essential Psychiatry (4th edn)

Edited by Robin M. Murray, Kenneth S. Kendler, Peter McGuffin, Simon Wessely & David J. Castle
Cambridge University Press. 2008.
£48.00 (pb). 752pp.
ISBN: 9780521604086

There are very few prospects less appetising than the appearance of a new edition of yet another multi-author textbook in any discipline. Far too often such textbooks are over-sized, over-priced and characterised by an overwhelming sense of disjointed incoherence, as an arbitrary selection of topics receive idiosyncratic treatments at the hands of a variety of uninterested authors, selected for no apparent reason. In fairness, though, not all multi-author textbooks fit this paradigm: occasionally, one such volume will provide a brisk, formatted run-through of current thinking about key themes and leave the reader with a genuine desire to seek out more focused, opinionated polemics on specific topics of interest.

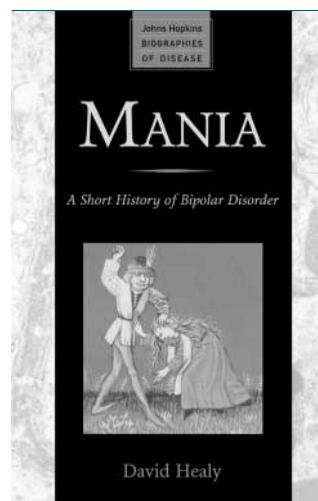
Happily, the 4th edition of *Essential Psychiatry* belongs firmly in the second category, managing to avoid the pitfalls of the dreaded multi-author format and producing some interesting new thinking in a range of areas. I was particularly impressed by the chapters on schizophrenia and related disorders by Robin M. Murray and Kimberlie Dean, and forensic psychiatry by Kimberlie Dean, Tom Fahy, David Ndegwa and Elizabeth Walsh. The chapter on social and cultural determinants of mental health by Vikram Patel, Alan J. Flisher and Alex Cohen is also outstanding and should be mandatory reading for psychiatry trainees at all levels.

Notwithstanding these considerable strengths, *Essential Psychiatry* is still a multi-author volume and as such lacks the forceful clarity and focus that accompany a single author's voice. This is not a fault of the volume itself, but the format. On this basis, then, although there is a clear need for texts such as this one, there is a similarly pressing need that they be complemented by shorter, single-author volumes that not only summarise existing evidence in specific areas, but offer radically new, opinionated ways of thinking about psychiatry.

There are, sadly, few such polemics published any more, as publishing houses tend towards the 'compilation' rather than 'authorship' of textbooks. Incidentally, 2010 will see the 200th anniversary of one of the most interesting single-author textbooks of psychiatry ever published in Ireland or the UK, Dr William Saunders Hallaran's *Enquiry into the Causes Producing the Extraordinary Addition to the Number of Insane together with Extended Observations on the Cure of Insanity with Hints as to the Better Management of Public Asylums for Insane Persons* (Edwards & Savage, 1810). Best of all, Dr Hallaran's book can be downloaded free of charge from the Google Books website (www.books.google.com) and should be of interest to practising psychiatrists and trainees alike. In addition, of course, to *Essential Psychiatry*.

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Mania. A Short History of Bipolar Disorder

By David Healy.
The Johns Hopkins University Press.
2008. US\$24.95 (hb). 320pp.
ISBN: 9780801888229

In the preface to his new book, David Healy, chronicler of the evolution of psychopharmacology and fearless critic of the pharmaceutical industry, offers some playful remarks about