

Psychological Medicine

MONOGRAPH SUPPLEMENT 12

Classification of mental
disorder in primary care
by R. Jenkins, N. Smeeton
and M. Shepherd

Cambridge University Press

Classification of mental disorder in primary care

Classification is an integral part of scientific thinking, and all scientific disciplines are structured on its principles. Family doctors in several countries are aware of the pressing importance of developing a sound classificatory system which is applicable to primary care settings. The functions of diagnosis are not only descriptive and aetiological but also prognostic and therapeutic. Without a commonly accepted diagnostic language it is impossible to communicate about the patient, to establish reliable standards of care, to evaluate advances in treatment, or to plan the development of the relevant health services.

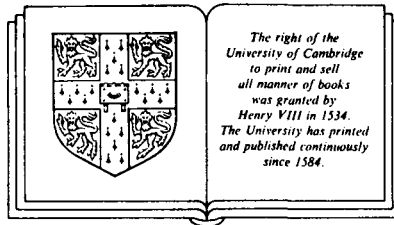
This monograph describes a study, using real life general practice consultations, which demonstrates that neither ICD nor ICHPPC can be consistently applied to mental disorder presenting in primary care. The participants, senior GPs, tended to aim for a multi-dimensional formulation, to which neither ICD nor ICHPPC lend themselves. An overall formulation remains a better tool for the clinician than a single label, and the awareness of this need underlies current attempts to develop a multiaxial system of classification. This monograph traces the development of multiaxial schemata, and proposes a comprehensive model of classification which incorporates the notions of severity and duration as well as of category on the four dimensions of psychological illness, social stresses and supports, personality and physical illness.

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