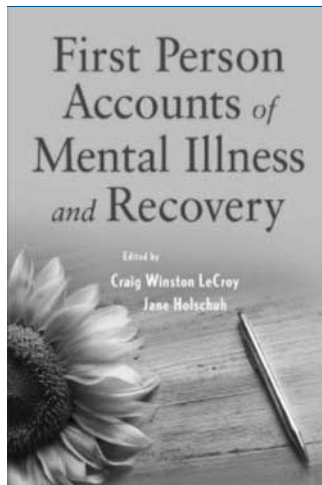


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



First Person Accounts of Mental Illness and Recovery

Edited by Craig Winston LeCroy
& Jane Holschuh.
Wiley. 2012.
£33.99 (pb). 516 pp.
ISBN: 9780470444528

I can still remember the first time I heard a patient talk about what it felt like to be ill. I was 19 and in my second year of pre-clinical training. It was educational and humbling, informative in ways that he would probably not have imagined possible (I knew really very little about healthcare or, in fact, illness). Hearing his experience of his relationship with his doctor brought, for a moment, the reality of what my chosen career might entail sharply into focus; something clicked.

Years later, I am still surprised at how few first-person accounts are used in postgraduate medical education. One might argue that they are unnecessary given that trainee psychiatrists encounter such stories aplenty in their day-to-day clinical work. Or that popular culture bombards us with just these sorts of first-person accounts of mental illness, or that postgraduate training has enough to incorporate as it is. That, however, would miss the mark, and this book is a salient reminder of the importance of first-person narratives within psychiatric training.

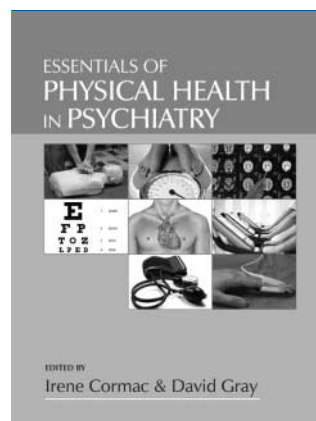
The first-person narrative stands in a very different relation to the clinician than either patient history or 'pop-memoir'. It is an entity quite apart from a patient's history or chronological collection of symptoms and invites us to learn uniquely as neither responsible clinician nor proxy-narrator. It acts to deepen our understanding of the experience of having a mental illness, appreciate what recovery might mean and the multiplicity of means through which it may be achieved. There is no doubt that first-person narratives are also a strong argument against stigma. Much of this is exemplified by the recovery model, which is now well-established as a central philosophy within mental healthcare delivery.

First Person Accounts of Mental Illness and Recovery is a collection of 60 such narratives, arranged around the DSM-IV and covering mental disorders from schizophrenia to dissociative and sleep disorders. The accounts are wonderfully heterogeneous and widely applicable, although, on occasion, feel rather too

American for the British market. Many accounts stand out but worth mentioning are: the psychiatrist who developed schizophrenia, the love letter to whisky from a recovering alcoholic and Tolstoy's beautiful 1887 account of his own depressive illness. This is a book which provides new perspectives on common experience.

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Essentials of Physical Health in Psychiatry

Edited by Irene Cormac
& David Gray.
RCPsych Publications. 2012.
£35.00 (pb). 496pp.
ISBN: 9781908020406

The frightening figures on premature mortality in schizophrenia have jolted government into action. The Royal College of Psychiatrists' commitments on parity of esteem are inspiring and give great hope for the future. But how does the psychiatrist of today put their grand aspirations into practice? Many of us will have trained at a time when in some centres psychiatrists didn't touch their patients, instead calling upon medical colleagues to sort out the most trivial of ailments. The ability to challenge diagnostic overshadowing rapidly atrophied – but it is time for psychiatrists to be seen as 'real doctors' again and it is our job to make sure our patients get the physical healthcare they are entitled to.

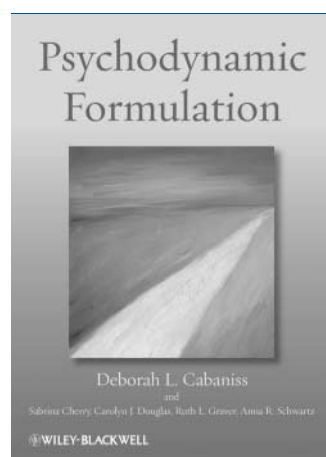
But some rapid revision is called for – you have to have the right lingo to advocate credibly! This book will give us confidence that we have an up-to-date handle on physical health, and just as importantly gives an idea of standards of clinical practice we should expect. Cormac & Gray's book explains the problem at a big-picture level – then each chapter covers a topic in detail.

The book is divided into four sections. The first describes professional roles, addresses reversible lifestyle choices, details the general and neurological examination and has a particularly useful chapter on the legal aspects of physical care. The next section gives detailed updates on assessment and management of relevant conditions. The third, on psychiatric specialties, would be great for induction of new starters. The final part, on medical emergencies and injuries, would be handy to have beside you on call.

There is a lot to be learnt from each chapter and they are easy to read and assimilate. The excellent and detailed guidance on management will require regular updating as new evidence emerges. This book will be invaluable to any member of the psychiatry team and will refresh our knowledge so we can treat both mind and body once more.

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Psychodynamic Formulation

By Deborah L. Cabaniss, Sabrina Cherry, Carolyn J. Douglas, Ruth L. Graver, Anna R. Schwartz. Wiley-Blackwell. 2013. £32.50 (hb). 274 pp. ISBN: 9781119962342

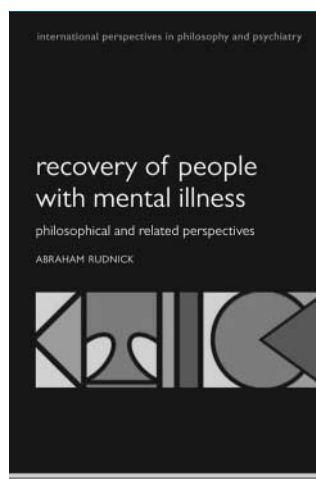
This book offers a brief overview of a psychodynamic approach to clinical case formulation. It is divided into five sections in which each of the components of the framework is introduced, with a final section covering the application of the formulation to clinical scenarios outside of a typical individual therapy setting. The formulation framework is broken down into an initial description of the patient's difficulties, the exploration of the personal and developmental history and finally efforts to link past experiences to current difficulties through the use of theories of attachment and object relations, among others. This overview of psychodynamic theories of development and defence against trauma will be of value to psychiatric trainees, with topics reviewed and presented in a concise manner. The final chapters, exploring the application of the formulation in emergency settings or psychopharmacology consultations, are perhaps the most useful.

Although written in the USA, the book is of relevance to the practising psychiatrist in the UK as well, given the ongoing debates surrounding efficacy and the place of depth psychotherapies in modern clinical practice. The role of formulation informing clinical practice and treatment has recently been represented in the popular press with the publication of a series of explorations by the psychoanalytic therapist and thinker, Darian Leader. His books have been well received, attracting supportive reviews by prominent figures such as Hilary Mantel and, along with the spirited debate generated by two recent critiques of psychiatric practice, indicate that the public appetite for debate around the role of psychiatry in society has not diminished.

While Cabaniss and colleagues can do little to address the ongoing debate, providing no new evidence or arguments either way, they do provide a clear, succinct summary of psychodynamic theory and demonstrate, through the use of illustrative clinical vignettes, the application of the described framework. While psychiatrists practising in the UK may be jealous of the occasional recommendation for twice-weekly therapy over a 3-year period, the closing chapters illustrating the application of psychodynamic formulation in the acute care setting are informative and support a series of articles on similar topics recently published in the College's CPD journal, *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*.

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Recovery of People with Mental Illness: Philosophical and Related Perspectives

Edited by Abraham Rudnick. Oxford University Press. 2012. £44.99 (pb). 344pp. ISBN: 9780199691319

This multi-author book attempts to pull together philosophical and related concepts relevant to recovery. The first section describes first-person accounts written from differing perspectives of recovery. Much of this courageous writing describes an evolving sense of self.

The historical chapters give interesting accounts of how the practices of Tuke and Pinel supported people with mental illness to strive to achieve self-control and self-determination. The epistemological considerations challenge conventional knowledge platforms and advocate constructivism as an approach to engage professionals in supporting outcomes as personally defined by users. Constructivism acknowledges that people are complex living systems and proactive agents who participate in their own life and that intrapsychic and interpersonal processes are dynamic and connected. How people appraise themselves and events has an impact on what they do. Therefore, notions of adaptation, reorientation and integration are important and need to be attended to. This crucial process of reflection provides opportunities for the self to be interpreted. We are, however, all