

## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

### Mental Health Services for Minority Ethnic Children and Adolescents

Edited by Mhemooda Malik & Carol Joughin.  
London: Jessica Kingsley. 2004. 224 pp.  
£16.95 (pb). ISBN 1843102366

At the outset I need to state that my perspective on culture is that ethnicity is only one of a range of components from which individuals construct a sense of self. The book states that it has been written for professionals and parents, and that the resources it presents are evidence-based and essential reading for anyone seeking to understand and promote children and young people's mental health.

The book is easy to read and highlights the key issues. Although it does help establish that the evidence base regarding services for these children is poor, I do not think the book helps identify how we might improve child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) for children from minority groups. I struggled with the implied dichotomy between Western perspectives as being somehow all negative and minority ethnic perspectives as being positive. Although I accept that this was perhaps not the intention, the fact that it came across as such was unhelpful. I was unclear as to how the recommendations at the beginning of the book were formulated and what evidence they were based on. My fear is that this book may encourage commissioners and providers to highlight minority needs in a superficial sense, in being able to tick off check-boxes. It does not challenge services to think about service improvement as a whole or really to improve the quality of care. To a prospective reader, I would say the key message is that the evidence base regarding CAMHS and minority groups is poor. With this in mind, think

about whether you would arrive at the same recommendations given such evidence, before implementing the suggested changes.

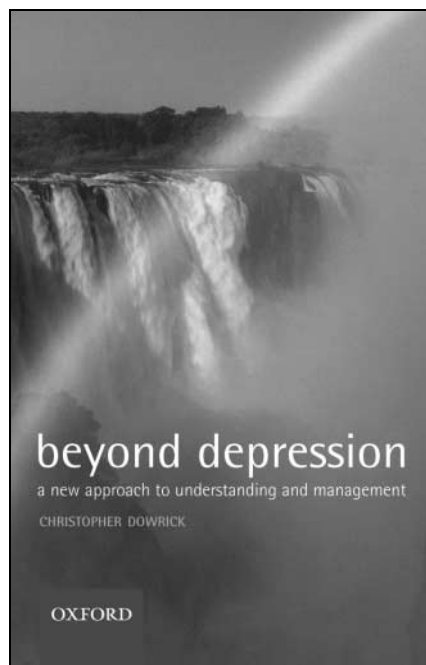
---

**Nisha Dogra** University of Leicester, Westcotes House, Westcotes Drive, Leicester LE3 0QU, UK.  
E-mail: ndl3@le.ac.uk

### Beyond Depression: A New Approach to Understanding and Management

By Christopher Dowrick. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004. 225 pp. £19.95 (pb).  
ISBN 0198526326

Some time ago, struggling to cope with the realities of life as an inner-city general



practitioner, I came across a paper by the author of this book that changed the way I practised (Dowrick, 1992). Thirteen years later Professor Chris Dowrick, now a highly respected academic general practitioner, has once again shown that there are many different ways of thinking about the doctor-patient relationship, this time in the context of depression. Depression is, of course, a serious business, contributing 12% of the total burden of non-fatal global disease, and generating over 23 million prescriptions for antidepressants in England in 2002. This is therefore a timely book. In the wake of the evidence-based but doctor-centred National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance on depression, it is also an important and necessary one.

*Beyond Depression* starts with a robust defence of depression as a medical entity, followed by the case for the prosecution that the concept of depression contains some important theoretical and functional problems. The heart of the book, however, lies in the chapters that reflect on alternative ways of understanding the thoughts and feelings within the concept of depression. Professor Dowrick proposes a new conceptual framework based on purpose and meaning, where practitioners are encouraged to be enablers who listen and understand rather than diagnose and prescribe. Patients' stories vividly illustrate how this new approach makes sense in practice. The book also suggests that when we help our patients to find better stories to tell about themselves, we also find opportunities to reflect on our own lives.

This is a beautifully written and erudite book. The reference list is an Aladdin's cave of literary, religious and political sources, with juxtapositions that should not work, yet somehow only add to the pleasure of reading this thoughtful and distinctive book. It deserves to become a classic.

---

**Dowrick, C. (1992)** Why do the O'Shea's consult so often? An exploration of complex family illness behaviour. *Social Science and Medicine*, **34**, 491-497.

---

**Helen Lester** Reader in Primary Care, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK. E-mail: h.e.lester@bham.ac.uk