

ends with review of the mode of action of anti-depressants (Kopin), neuroleptics (Bartholini), lithium (Schou *et al*), benzodiazepines (Ladinsky *et al*) and hallucinogens (Freedman).

Although this book is directed at "the entire range of individuals who are interested in the relevance of biochemical and medical knowledge to the psychiatric and neurologic patient", it will be largely incomprehensible to the lay reader. It is the physiologist and biochemist who are likely to find the book of most relevance. The clinical psychiatrist will find the chapters on the major psychoses of practical value in delineating the current views on the biochemical origin of these illnesses, although the remaining chapters should whet his appetite for the forthcoming feast of new neurotransmitters.

The book is an essential purchase for all biochemical and psychiatric libraries although it should be obtained in conjunction with the other volumes in the series.

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Emergency Psychiatry for the House Officer. By W. R. DUBIN and R. STOLBERG. Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd. 1981. Pp 166. £8.95.

Judging from its title and content this American book seeks to provide a concise practical guide to the management of patients with psychiatric disorders presenting to the casualty officer. After two general chapters on diagnosis and examination the authors cover systematically the major organic functional behavioural and drug and alcohol related disorders and conclude with a lengthy appendix on the psychiatric side effects of medical drugs. The general lay out and style are easy to follow and some of the chapters, especially those covering delirium, grief and the violent and suicidal patient are extremely good. Unfortunately the weakness of perhaps the most important chapter, namely that on the psychiatric examination, presents a major drawback. In addition some of the other chapters are patchy in quality and the use of a slightly different drug regime to that normally used in this country may confuse the British casualty officer. I therefore feel unable to recommend this book as it stands but would not wish to dismiss it completely. If it could be tightened up,

especially as far as the first chapter is concerned, then it would provide a useful guide to the casualty officer who often has to deal with complex psychiatric problems without immediate recourse to expert psychiatric help.

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Vulnerabilities to Delinquency. Edited by DOROTHY OTNOW LEWIS. Lancaster, Lancs: MTP Press. Pp 327. £24.50.

The approach to the study of delinquency can only be done in a broad fashion encompassing all of its aspects. Though technically a delinquent is any child under the age of sixteen who has registered a conviction against himself (or herself), in practice this includes such potentially widely differing children as those who steal to those who murder.

The manifestations of delinquency may be clearly social in nature, though its origins and antecedents are complex. The role of the doctor, and more particularly the psychiatrist, in the assessment and treatment of delinquents is best undertaken not only in the context of a multi-disciplinary therapeutic team but also in close proximity with the courts and social institutions which act to sustain human justice.

Vulnerabilities to Delinquency is written by an American Professor of Psychiatry who takes the very cogent view that the psychiatric assessment of delinquents is often inadequate. It may fail to elicit psychiatric symptoms, and even frank psychiatric illness including psychosis, when the aggressive behaviour of the child is of an unacceptable degree. Workers in the contemporary forensic field would endorse the observation that antisocial behaviour may at times be not a feature of a patient's personality but rather a symptom of an illness which is a departure from the norm for that individual.

Professor Otnow Lewis presents a detailed and balanced discussion which demonstrates the many areas of overlap between antisocial disorders and medical and psychiatric factors in both delinquents and their families. I very much enjoyed reading this book and would positively recommend it as a valuable addition for all those interested in further understanding of the reasons why children and young adults defy the norms of society.

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