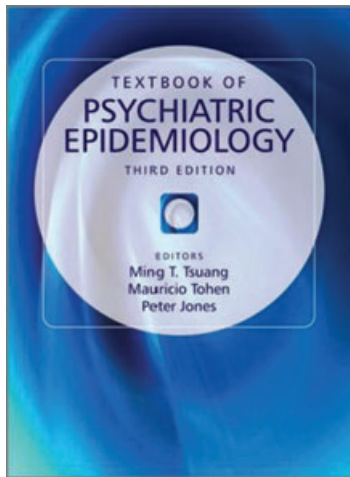


Book review



Textbook of psychiatric epidemiology, third edition
Tsuang MT, Tohen M, Jones P (Eds) Chichester, UK,
John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2011. Hardcover: 660 pages,
€144.00. ISBN: 9780470694671.

According to the notes on the cover of this new edition of the Textbook of Psychiatric Epidemiology, it has been thoroughly revised and expanded compared to earlier versions – probably, in part, reflecting the addition of Peter Jones to the editor group, as well as the rapid development of the field has seen since the last edition. The editors have students of psychiatric epidemiology, psychiatric residents, general psychiatrists and other mental health professionals as their target audience.

Reviewing this textbook has been an interesting task and has led me to reflect upon the question about who does one write textbooks for? Probably, few people will read a book like this from cover to cover, and certainly doing so, would probably be beyond what most psychiatric residents and general psychiatrists would do. Also, programs for students needing a full overview of the epidemiology of mental disorders across the whole diagnostic panorama are few and far between. Also, intrinsically books like this, consisting of several review chapters will be at risk of becoming out of date rather quickly, and multi-author books like this run the risk of becoming uneven in the format or coverage of the individual chapters. Therefore, given all my preconceptions, I engaged in the process of reading this book with

some skepticism. However, in many ways reading the book has been a positive surprise and a pleasure.

Glynn Lewis provides a very nice introduction to epidemiologic research methods, clear succinct and well written. The chapters on genetic epidemiology, gene environment interactions, register-based epidemiology, health services research, pharmacoepidemiology and natural history of psychopathology, just to mention a few, all provide very well written comprehensive introductions to the respective areas. The chapters on the individual mental disorders cover most of the diagnostic spectrum and also categories that somewhat overlap, for example, the chapter on geriatric psychiatry and the chapter on mental illness in mothers and their children include disorders that are also mentioned in other chapters. I particularly liked the chapters on schizophrenia and autism, whereas I would have liked the chapter on depression to more emphatically go beyond what is known from American general population surveys and give a broader perspective on what is known about risk factors for this important group of disorders. Also, one can always discuss how the emphasis should be distributed between genetic and environmental risk factors, for example, in relation to autism and ADHD, but in general, the chapters provides very useful overviews of the existing literature.

So, I started this review process with a great deal of skepticism. I am still not sure to which extent this book will be read if it ends up in the book shelves of residents and general psychiatrists or other mental health professionals. However, during this process I have ended up reading about areas outside my own main research field with much interest, and chapters within my own areas with much pleasure and admiration for the contributions; and, I have found myself recommending individual chapters again and again to students and other people with whom I, during this period, have discussed specific projects. So, much to my own surprise, I end up warmly recommending this book to anyone who has a professional interest in the epidemiology of, and risk factors for psychiatric disorders, and a recurring need for a fast reference to a very comprehensive array of knowledge.

*Professor Preben Bo Mortensen, MD, DMSc
National Centre for Register-based Research,
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark*