

Book review

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Psychiatry and Heart Disease: The Mind, Brain and Heart.

Edited by M. Riba, L. Wulsin, and M. Rubenfire (associate editor: D. Ravindranath). (Pp. 272; Price £64.99; ISBN 9780470685808.) John Wiley & Sons: Chichester, UK. 2012

This book brings together North American cardiologists and psychiatrists to provide comprehensive coverage of a range of heart diseases, and the co-morbid psychiatric and psycho-social issues. Significant advances in our knowledge base have occurred over the past 40 years and in 18 chapters this book provides contemporary literature review, assessment and treatment guidelines. A host of clinical insights are demonstrated in clinical vignettes illustrating reasonable treatment approaches and goals, providing appropriate suggestions to guide clinicians. The book is technically written but is certainly not beyond clinicians unfamiliar with the field.

An immediately useful summary of the relationship between psychological distress in cardiovascular disease is provided in chapter 1. A cogent summary of contemporary understandings of episodic and chronic psychological factors in the progression of cardiovascular disease (CVD) are well detailed in schematic diagrams. In paying close attention to bio-behavioural pathways, the second chapter expands the relationship between depression and CVD. Chapter 3 centres on heart failure with considerable focus on depression, but manages to highlight a paucity of much needed research in this area such as clinical treatment trials.

Chapters 4–6 detail various cardiac conditions and surgical interventions, namely open heart surgery, transplantation and left ventricular assist devices, implantable cardioverter-defibrillators and sudden cardiac death. These topics are among the most challenging conditions facing clinicians and therefore these chapters make for essential reading. The guidelines for pre-cardiac surgery assessment were judicious whereas the cardiac transplant chapter has extensive breadth that was readily collated under easy to follow subheadings.

Thereafter chapters 7–15 highlight unique aspects of some of the typically lesser researched cardiac conditions with respect to psychological distress. In particular the coverage of pulmonary hypertension, genetic testing and counselling alongside hypertrophic cardiomyopathy are welcome additions to a book of this type. The bipolar disorder chapter was a standout with extensive, detailed and informative treatment outline and structure, in addition to tabulated information on different drug classes and side-effects. Coverage of post-traumatic stress disorder shows a commendable effort to detail treatment options despite limited empirical basis in CVD populations, and should prompt further discussion and research in this area. Similarly a chapter detailing cardio-phobia provides thought-provoking discussion on effects of arousal with exposure therapies, hypervigilance to bodily sensations and future oriented trauma. Chapters 16–18 detail emerging and important areas for clinicians. These include the practical tips for depression treatment with exercise, third-wave cognitive-behavioural therapies including meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction, and finally behaviour modification with addictions such as tobacco and illicit substances.

What distinguishes this book from others in the field is that a number of CVDs are given separate coverage. In instances where there is little extant literature, the authors do a praiseworthy job extrapolating the relevant clinical issues from other related heart diseases, particularly coronary artery disease and acute-coronary syndromes. However, at times a difficult issue is merely highlighted and the clinical aspects not explained further which could be rectified in future editions. Further information regarding psycho-geriatric matters such as cognitive decline, social isolation, frailty and other medical comorbidities would also be a welcome addition. This book will serve as a handy reference for multidisciplinary clinicians with cardiac patients and has already proved useful to my everyday practice.

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