

on antidepressants provides a very useful review, but UK drugs such as mianserin are not included. Some newer drugs, for example, the 5-HT reuptake inhibitors and the specific MAO-A (monoamine oxidase-A) and MAO-B inhibitors are described. There is a useful section on plasma monitoring and the issue of combination therapy is discussed, with words of caution about combining 5-HT reuptake inhibitors with other drugs. Chapter five deals with the psychoses and covers key issues, such as low-dose scheduling, treatment resistance and combination therapy. The discussion on clozapine is of interest as it has only recently been marketed in the UK. On the other hand pimozide is not used in the US and is consequently not mentioned, and haloperidol is the only butyrophenone used for psychosis. The role of long-acting depot medication is considered controversial in the majority of patients, although the evidence cited is selective. The section on adverse drug reactions, including movement disorders and the neuroleptic malignant syndrome, is useful. The latter are discussed at length in this short book, probably reflecting the greater concern over issues of litigation in the USA. Chapter six deals with mood-stabilising drugs and is particularly informative on the use of lithium and carbamazepine. The final chapter is on the drug treatment of disorders of childhood and adolescence. It focuses on 'attention-deficit' disorder and autism, with brief mention of other conditions, including a section on mental retardation.

This is a useful reference book, with a clear layout and readable style, providing up-to-date information on questions of the psychopharmacology of a number of psychiatric drugs. The major limitation of this book is that it is written for the psychiatrist in the USA. This, together with the price, is likely to make it less attractive to readers in the UK.

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The Essential Guide to Psychiatric Drugs. By JACK GORMAN. New York: St Martin's Press. 1990. 397 pp. \$22.95.

This book is concerned with the nature, actions, uses and side-effects of psychotropic drugs in current use. Equally important is the full attention given to the patient's needs and setting. The descriptive section is preceded by several chapters in which psychopharmacology and the two main approaches in psychiatric treatment are described. Advice is given on how to decide if you need a psychotropic compound, the points to consider before seeing a psychiatrist, and the basis on which to choose your prescriber. An explanation of side-effects and discussion on length of treatment conclude the detailed introduction.

In the 250 pages of the reference guide, drugs are classified according to their clinical function and the headings refer to treatment of depression, anxiety, bipolar affective disorder and schizophrenia. Drugs for insomnia and for the treatment of drug abuse are well covered. In each section, when appropriate, there is a guide to when treatment is necessary, a classification of the disorder, a list of symptoms, ways of reaching a diagnosis (DSM-III-R is used) and a comparative review of the drugs available. Each drug is then described individually.

The later chapters cover the treatment of violence, weight loss and gain, pregnancy, treating the problems of AIDS, genetic links, brand names and 'how psychiatric drugs work'. There is a short glossary. Throughout, the author looks realistically at patients' (and relatives') needs, pulling no punches about how to ensure satisfaction. In doing so he conveys something of the scene of psychiatric practice in the United States. An estimate of the level of sophistication and recency may be gained from the inclusion of amoxapine, fluoxetine and carbamazepine but no mention of thyroid.

Bearing in mind it is written for the US public, it can be recommended to patients without reservation. Perhaps it also provides (unwittingly) the psychiatrist with an interesting source of self-audit inexplicably difficult to locate in our professional textbooks.

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Bizarre Behaviours. By HERSCHEL PRINS. London & New York: Tavistock/Routledge. 1990. 111 pp. £25.00 (hb), £9.99 (pb).

Prins is perhaps best known for his hunt for vampires; a search which seems now to have preoccupied him for a number of years. This is the focal part of his book and constitutes its principal and longest chapter. How successful has his hunt been?

There is plenty of mythology and folklore here, but precious little hard fact. A circular questionnaire sent to 45 persons (34 of them psychiatrists – I think I remember being one of them) who might possibly have been expected to have had some first-hand knowledge of this esoteric condition, seems to have produced no actual cases. While the survey of the literature is extensive, not only of vampirism, but of other engaging mysteries, its main weakness is the inability of its author to draw upon his own first-hand experiences.

Apart from vampirism, Prins deals with a number of other somewhat obscure psychiatric conditions, some of them exotic and oriental; some nearer home. Again, while the review of the literature on these topics is of considerable value, accounts couched in terms of first-hand experience are, once again, conspicuously lacking.