

the use of cocaine in the middle classes in the USA of 48% between 1985 and 1989, followed by "This must be interpreted with caution, as many other measures show problems from crack use to be increasing". (p. 18) These other measures are not specified. Sadly, no data are presented from the Bahamas, on which presumably the authors have a mass of clinical and demographic data.

So, while the authors may well have had much to tell us, their way of telling invalidates their own message. Their book is essentially a fire and brimstone sermon, and we British are unlikely to be that easily intimidated into acceptance of their alarmist view particularly when it is so evangelically expressed.

But what if they are right? It makes you think.

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**Mind: The Complete Guide to Psychiatric Drugs.** By RON LACEY. London: Ebury Press. 1991. 200 pp. £7.99.

It has been a cause of personal regret that some years ago, *Mind* adopted the position of campaigning for the mentally ill as if they were solely an under-privileged minority whose need was to have their civil liberties protected. I therefore regarded a guide to psychotropic drugs for the layman by this organisation as a possible change of heart. Sadly my hopes were dashed, and I found reading this volume an unpleasant experience.

The author's view seems to be that, with rare exceptions, psychiatrists and other doctors are at best misguided and ill-informed, and at worst, willing disciples of evil pharmaceutical companies, who peddle dangerous substances to the innocent populace for financial gain with no regard for their health. His view of drug therapy is that, for the most part, it is probably unnecessary, and frequently harmful. He believes that the prevention and cure of all psychiatric illness lies elsewhere. Like all good propagandists, he tries to be careful not to overstate his case, and the book is peppered with statements to "consult your doctor" before stopping any treatment.

The book is divided into sections on anxiolytic, anti-depressant, neuroleptic, and antimanic drugs; there are also short chapters on anti-Parkinsonian and stimulant drugs. After brief historical introductions and descriptions of diseases, the text consists of descriptions of drugs that are mainly derived from the data sheets. No simplified explanations of their psychopharmacology are provided, but reference is made to selected research papers whose conclusions are acceptable to the basic premise that detrimental side-effects and drug interactions exist. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the dangers of taking medication, but the author fails to differentiate between described side-effects and adverse

reactions. No mention is made of risk/benefit ratios. It is perhaps not surprising that the book ends with a guide to complaints procedures. There are a significant number of errors in the text and the content is not up-to-date.

I was left with the feeling that if this volume needed to be produced, it should have been written by an experienced clinician with an interest in psychopharmacology.

It is quite possible that a vulnerable section of the community will read it and be influenced adversely by its contents. I do not recommend it as suitable reading material for any interested patient, client, consumer, or their families, and hope that a future publication giving a more balanced assessment of drug therapy in psychiatry will be written for lay readership.

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**Handbook of Psychological Assessment 2nd edition.** By G. GOLDSTEIN and M. HERSEN. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1990. 608 pp. \$90.00.

The editors felt they needed to update and expand the first edition of the Handbook which appeared in 1984. In this endeavour they are probably wise. Much, if not most, of contemporary psychology has devoted itself to measurement. In fact many psychologists view accurate measurement as the basis of psychology. However, what is measured and how measurement is conceptualised can reflect a vast array of different viewpoints. The concept of the discipline of psychology as a homogeneous body is erroneous, more realistically it is an umbrella term for a number of different schools of thought which can approach their subject matter from different perspectives and with different goals. Here lies the difficulty in tackling such a potentially broad but fundamental topic as psychological assessment and including its subject matter in one, albeit large, volume. In such a difficult task, the editors have made a valiant effort. They have put together a well written, scholarly and comprehensive text. There are ten sections made up of 23 chapters. These sections include: historical introduction; the psychometric foundations of testing; assessment of intelligence; achievement, aptitude and interest; neuropsychological assessment; interviewing personality assessment; behavioural assessment; assessment and intervention; and special topics – which consists of chapters on the assessment of minority group members and computer-assisted assessment. These last two chapters are especially welcome.

There is a comprehensive feel to the volume in both its coverage – for example there are separate chapters on children and adults where appropriate within the different sections – and in emphasising the function of assessment information – such as directions for

intervention or management. However, there are also weaknesses: there is some repetition between chapters especially where covering related topics; there is, perhaps for English readers, too much of a bias towards assessment instruments used in North America, such as the MMPI, the Rorschach and DSM-III-R. Perhaps more of a problem for the prospective buyer is the very breadth of content matter itself. Would the behaviour analyst be interested in the Rorschach? Would the child neuropsychologist be interested in adult personality testing? Someone with particular interests within psychological assessment would probably do better consulting specialist texts. Even the broadcast courses on assessment follow certain theoretical lines and ignore others, which would make books of narrower coverage than this one more useful. This I think is a real problem for this book, the topic of assessment is becoming so immense that a single volume covering everything is somewhat anachronistic. There is much of value in this book, but readers of this journal will probably find that much of the content is superfluous to their needs and they would be better off going for a more specialist text that can provide a deeper coverage than is possible in such a handbook.

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**Psychiatry: A World Perspective. Volume 3. Pharmacotherapies, Psychotherapies, Other Therapies.** Edited by C. N. STEFANIS, A. D. RABAVILLAS and C. R. SOLDATOS. Amsterdam: Excerpta Medica. 1990. 1001 pp.

Apparently, the earth viewed from space is disappointing in one important respect. Space travellers strain their eyes to see evidence of man's activities, but apart from tree lines in the plantations of Canada and some open-cast gold mines in Australia, nothing can be detected. This 'world perspective' suffers the same disappointment. Despite a panoramic view of the major classes of psychotropic drugs and other biological treatments, psychoanalysis and related dynamic therapy, cognitive and behaviour therapies, family therapy and therapeutic communities, and crisis intervention, it is difficult to be certain what is going on.

The editors insist that the papers (part of the proceedings of the 8th World Congress of Psychiatry) "all tie

together in a comprehensive, well integrated fashion" so that this volume, and the other three in the series, can be used "both as an updated reference textbook and as a fresh-from-the-print scientific journal". I cannot comment on the other volumes but if the editors' statement is true this must be the odd one out. Just to take one example chosen at random, there are 228 pages devoted to neuroleptic drugs. An introductory article gives two pages of review before launching into the description of a study involving family management and drug treatment, which is followed by another on treatment strategies to prevent relapse. We then have eight articles on the value of blood concentrations of psychotropic drugs, five articles on clozapine, nine on even newer drugs (e.g. remoxipride, risperidone, sultopride) in disorders ranging from schizophrenia to dysthymia and alcoholism, three papers on a neologism called neuroleptanxiolysis, one on their use as antidepressants, and we finish with seven papers on the neuroleptic malignant syndrome.

Where is the world perspective here? Most neuroleptics are used in the maintenance treatment of schizophrenia, often in depot forms, and given by non-medical staff who are getting increasingly proficient at detecting akathisia, dystonia and early Parkinsonian symptoms. Is this not relevant, or has it not been researched? All we get is a few misleading scars on the landscape which lack connections with the rest and omit large areas of relevant concern. This does not mean that the papers are redundant, although many are for different reasons; they duplicate other publications less well than the originals and at times the camera copies exhaust the eyes. The blurb just needs to be more honest. The following would be more accurate and might serve as a crude model for the proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Psychiatry.

"This is a compilation of the papers presented at the Congress. Most of these were organised in symposia concerned with special topics and were not edited before publication. Some were very good, some were mediocre and some were terrible; the reader has to decide which is which as no other guidance is given. If you have a special interest in the subjects covered by the symposia you may find part of this book valuable, otherwise you must expect to be disappointed."

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