

Book reviews

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Eating Disorders in Children and Adolescents.
(Cambridge Child and Adolescent Psychiatry series.) Edited by T. Jaffa and B. McDermott
(Pp. 324; £40.00; ISBN 0521613124.) Cambridge University Press. 2007.

This book is aimed at clinicians working in or having an interest in working in the field of child and adolescent eating disorders. It is divided into five sections: introduction, scientific underpinnings, abnormal states, evidence-based care and public health perspectives and claims to bring the experience of numerous practitioners with international reputations to bear on the ‘broad range of issues a good clinician needs to know about’.

Chapter 1 does not disappoint; it places the subject eloquently within its historical context and certainly whets the reader’s appetite for further indulgence. The next high point is chapter 5 where Fornari and Dancyger present an excellent overview of the physical and cognitive changes associated with puberty. The intervening chapters in my opinion would be best placed a scientific journal as they present a specific paper rather than an overview of what is currently available to know and as such are extremely limited and quickly outdated.

Moving through the section on abnormal states: these chapters are most suitable to the newcomer to the field as there is very little new information presented, which is disappointing, considering some of these authors are at the cutting edge of research in the United Kingdom. Having said that, these chapters provide solid information, presented in a clear and understandable format. The exception being the chapter on childhood obesity, in which Braet has clearly described the factors associated with the development of childhood obesity as well as the role of the family in the treatment of this illness.

The reader is then presented with the chapters on evidence-based care of which chapter 16

‘assessment and treatment of acute medical complications during refeeding process’ stands out as an excellent presentation of the complications with clear descriptions of signs and symptoms and how to treat them. This chapter should be required reading for all clinicians involved in refeeding. Chapter 17 ‘assessment and treatment of chronic medical complications’ and chapter 19 ‘evidence-based family psychotherapy interventions’ are also excellent chapters, outlining the chapter subject clearly, reflecting on the current literature as well as thinking about what remains unknown.

Finally the reader is invited to consider the public health perspectives in relation to the development and treatment of eating disorders, which starts off well commenting on the socio-political aspects but leaves the reader feeling unsatisfied when it finishes by reporting on the authors’ studies.

This type of book warrants chapters that review the current literature and comments on the pertinent points from that literature to give the reader some theoretical and scientific basis for the subject as well as an argument for and against the current beliefs based on research and clinical experience. As such this book falls short by having chapters focused on presenting findings from the authors own specific studies. The reader wants to be informed by the author(s) research and clinical experience so that having read the book/chapter is left with an understanding of what the issues are on the given topic but also how to implement the ideas into clinical practice.

The title of the book suggests that the content will be focusing on children and adolescents, however, several of the chapters state that there is no research on children and adolescents for the particular topic, so refer to adult studies. One chapter does not even mention children and adolescents and is on a topic, neuroimaging, for which there is much research with this age group in this country (United Kingdom). It seems that in the absence of child and adolescent research or in the absence of knowledge of such research,

there is a default position of trying to apply adult findings to the younger client population. This makes child and adolescent issues perhaps a complication of an adult disorder, which of course we all know is not the case as these particular disorders do indeed mainly develop in adolescence.

In conclusion, for the reader that likes to consume a book cover to cover this is not the book for you. If, however, you like to pick out selective chapters and discard the rest then there is something of interest in here for most people.

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Beyond Nature and Nurture in Psychiatry: Genes, Environment and their Interplay. Edited by J. MacCabe, O. O'Daly, R. Murray, P. McGuffin and P. Wright. (Pp. 240; £60; ISBN 9780415373005.) Taylor & Francis (UK) Ltd. 2006.

James MacCabe and colleagues have edited a useful volume of chapters about an evolving area of psychiatric and behavioral research: gene-environment interactions. The theme of the volume is that it is time to move beyond the 'nature v. nurture' debate and recognize that we now have methodologies that provide rich opportunities to understand how behavior is influenced by environmental and genetic factors, with the traditional methods of behavior genetics merging with modern technologies for exploring the effects of specific DNA sequences variations among people. There are 21 chapters; three introductory chapters, followed by a series of chapters by researchers who have been working on relevant problems in studies of cognitive abilities, childhood disorders and development, affective (mood) disorders, psychotic disorders, addictions, and diagnostic issues. Most chapters are relatively brief overviews. The book will be most useful as a starting point for students and trainees, as well as for clinicians looking for a window into this fascinating area of research. Researchers may find it valuable as an introduction to work outside their own fields.

Several of the chapters are particularly valuable. Pak Sham provides an excellent summary

of the types of gene-environment interactions and methodologies for studying them. Sharon Schwartz and Ezra Susser argue that standard twin study methods underestimate the contribution of shared environment (that which impacts on both siblings), by attributing entirely to genetic factors the effects of gene-environment interactions with shared environment, and by attributing to unique environment (impacting only on one sibling in the family) the effects of interactions between shared and unique environment. Heather Ross and Larry Young provide an engrossing summary of the evidence that a specific DNA sequence variant in the vasopressin receptor gene influences bonding and paternal nurturant behavior in prairie voles (although gene-environment interaction is not specifically demonstrated). Tyrone Cannon describes how twin designs can differentiate between the effects of genes (including specific variants in the *DISC1* and *TRAX* genes on chromosome 1) and non-genetic factors (such as fetal hypoxia) on anatomical and neuropsychological differences in schizophrenia patients and their relatives. Kenneth Kendler ends the book with a thought-provoking summary of his group's work on gene-environment interactions – more about this work later.

There are too many chapters to note all of them here. Other chapters which I found particularly interesting include Marcus Richards' summary of the relationship between birth weight and IQ; a balanced and thoughtful review (by Stanley Zammet and Michael Owen) about the hypothesis that risk of depression is increased by an interaction between stressful life events and the short allele of a specific serotonin transporter gene variant genotype; Ian Goodyer's fascinating summary of work on the effects of genes and psychological adversity on adolescent depression, mediated by increased cortisol levels (although evidence for an association between depression and DNA variation in the glucocorticoid receptor is perhaps accepted a bit too uncritically); a sober but appropriately optimistic summary by Nigel Williams and colleagues of genetic findings in schizophrenia; and a clear, concise review by Isabelle Boileau and colleagues of the relationships among novelty seeking, addictions, and binding at the dopamine-2 and -3 receptors as measured by positron emission tomography. Some chapters