

Geriatric neuropsychology: Practice Essentials

Edited by **Shane S Bush & Thomas A Martin. Taylor & Francis, New York 2005. pp 552.**

Geriatric Neuropsychology: Practice Essentials aims to present recent research and information from neuropsychology and related disciplines considered essential for clinical practice with older adults. The emphasis is on the practical clinical application of advances in our knowledge of ageing and dementia. This book differs from several recent comprehensive neuropsychological texts in that it addresses issues specific to the assessment and treatment of older adults, which can differ significantly from those arising in the assessment of younger adults.

There are four sections, with a brief introductory section followed by authoritative contributions on Assessment, Neurological Disorders, and Clinical Considerations. A limitation, minor but noteworthy, is the fact that all the contributors are American which leads at times to a degree of selection bias in the literature cited and in the specific instruments overviewed.

The Assessment section includes very informative chapters on the selection and use of screening instruments in geriatric neuropsychology, and on fixed and flexible neuropsychological batteries for older adults. Of particular value here is the chapter by Caplan and Shechter on test accommodations. Flexibility is a key issue in assessment of the older adult. The issue of non-standard modification of standardised tests is an important one, as a balance needs to be struck between achieving assessment objectives yet not straying so far from standardised formats as to invalidate a test's psychometric properties. The Assessment section also includes very useful contributions on the application of technology, cultural considerations and an overview of structural and functional neuroimaging.

Section Three covers the most common neurological disorders of the elderly, including an excellent contribution by Zec

and Berkett on Alzheimer's disease, and chapters covering Cerebrovascular disorders, and Parkinson's Disease and related disorders. Of note here is an interesting chapter by Thomas Martin and Brick Johnstone on traumatic brain injury in older adults, an area that has tended to be neglected to some extent.

The final section, Clinical Considerations, encompasses a range of topics including co-morbid medical and psychiatric conditions (depression, anxiety, psychosis), sleep disorders and their impact on cognitive function in ageing, pain assessment and its relationship to neuropsychological functioning, geriatric psychopharmacology, family treatment issues, and ethical issues in geriatric neuropsychology. Two chapters stood out here for me. Johnson-Greene and Inscore discuss substance abuse in older adults. While we in Ireland may be aware of alcohol abuse in the elderly (who changes the habits of a lifetime!) we may be less aware of the intentional or unintentional misuse of a range of other substances, illicit, prescribed or OTC, which can impact on cognition and behaviour. Of particular interest was the chapter by Moberg and Gibney on the assessment of decision making capacity in older adults. Increasingly, Neuropsychologists are being asked to make competency judgements, the basis for which necessitates a considered combination of clinical interview and appropriate neuropsychological testing. There are no easy answers but Moberg & Gibney provide sound advice on how to approach this challenging issue.

Overall I feel that *Geriatric Neuropsychology: Practice Essentials* is a valuable resource which I would readily recommend to psychologists and clinicians working with older adults in clinical settings, who will find it of value in guiding the selection and application of appropriate assessment instruments tailored to the specific need of elderly clients.

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Attention all registrars and trainees!

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