

authors include a detailed exposition of the course of therapy in a case of borderline personality. The clinical chapters are unusually well graced with advice based on research results as well as clinical wisdom. The broad range of clinical populations covered provides opportunities for the discussion of very different approaches to group therapy such as the short-term focus with in-patients and the focus on cognitive issues with learning disabled adolescents.

There is a brief concluding chapter in which the editors summarise the differences between working with adolescent and adult groups and list the qualities especially needed by therapists working with adolescents.

Overall, the editors do, with some reservations, succeed in their aims to "present adolescent group psychotherapy in a contemporary light" and to provide "a helpful manual for both the beginning therapist and the senior clinician".

E. C. CROUCH, *Consultant Psychiatrist,
St John's Hospital, Aylesbury*

Issues in Geriatric Psychiatry (Advances in Psychosomatic Medicine, vol. 19). Edited by N. BILLIG and P. V. RABINS. Basle: S. Karger AG. 1989. viii + 184 pp. £43.50.

This book is the latest in a long series of hardback books considering the most recent advances in psychosomatic medicine. There are eleven chapters from invited authors, the vast majority coming from the USA, on a wide range of topics from sleep disorders through agitation to sexual problems. Some are only of relevance to the American system but the majority are equally appropriate both sides of the Atlantic.

The chapter on delirium in older adults by Lipowski is a neat, concise and well referenced dissertation on what can be a very confusing subject! Peters reviews the concept of 'excess disability' in dementia, concentrating on the concepts of treatable versus curable illness, and stressing the importance of thorough evaluation. Waldhorn's chapter examines in detail the common problem of sleep disorders in the elderly, and contains the clearest account that I have read of both normal sleep patterns and the various disorders from insomnia to sleep apnoea.

Wise presents a biopsychosocial perspective on sexuality, confirming that sex does not stop at forty but highlighting the increasing difficulties with regard to vascular problems and cancer that may confront the

elderly sexually-active person. Gottlieb's chapter on hypochondriasis is rather difficult to digest but is thorough and well referenced, and the review of agitation in the elderly is well structured and practical.

The chapter on the nursing home resident as a psychiatric patient provides an interesting insight into the differences between the British and American systems, and the section in this chapter on the financial viability of providing a consultation service for nursing homes may be an example of shades of things to come!

The update on geriatric psychopharmacology is an excellent addition to the available literature and the chapters on liaison psychiatry and assessment of competence for making health care decisions are concise, readable and informative. There is little to fault in this book. It is an excellent reference work for the already established specialist, and although probably a little too pricey for the interested paramedic, should be an essential addition to any psychiatric library shelf.

MIKE MOWERS, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Frenchay
Health Authority, Bristol*

Psychosomatic Symptoms: Psychodynamic Treatment of the Underlying Personality Disorder. Edited by C. PHILIP WILSON and IRA L. MINTZ. London: Jason Aronson. 1989. 460 pp. £44.50.

This very interesting book is divided into three parts. In the first part, the psychodynamic structure of the personality of the psychosomatic patient is discussed. The second and third parts deal with asthma and inflammatory bowel disease respectively. Theory is illustrated by vivid clinical material and it is refreshing to see that these authors wish to challenge the prevailing concept of alexithymia which they consider as unnecessary and perhaps misleading.

The authors discuss their way of dealing with psychosomatic patients and subscribe to Melita Spierling's view of psychosomatic disorder as a manifestation of a pre-genital conversion neurosis.

The authors' recommendation that the psychoanalyst should be the sole doctor to the patient and that all decisions must be made by the psychoanalyst and the patient alone is very controversial. For this reason, although I find the book fascinating, its concept of treatment of psychosomatic disorder is limited.

S. ZALADIS, *General Practitioner, Well Street, London*