

audience but 'the busy general practitioner and other primary care team members' is. For this group of health professionals it is woefully lacking in substance and it is directed to the lowest common denominator of knowledge of depressive disorders. Indeed were the 'busy general practitioner and other primary care team members' to find this pocket book useful it would be an indictment of the current crop of primary health care professionals and would raise serious questions about their ability to deal with those suffering from these disorders at all.

The writers suggest memorising the DSM criteria for major depression – an exercise in procrustean dogma and remote from the clinical acumen which the skilled health professional utilises in making diagnosis. The differential diagnosis is considered in less than half a page and the authors do not mention, anywhere in the text, the distinction from adjustment disorders, the category probably most commonly seen in general practice, or the diagnostic confusion with anxiety disorders, again a frequent occurrence in the primary care setting. While the various antidepressant groups are listed along with their common side-effects the authors could have usefully provided assistance in choosing between one group and another or between different drugs in the same group, instead the authors choose to limit themselves to a broad descriptive sweep.

General practitioners constantly refer to the problems of compliance which they encounter among their patients once symptomatic improvement has been noticed. The authors of this book correctly recommend antidepressant treatment for 4–6 months but with no hints on how to encourage this.

The section on suicide risk assessment following an episode of parasuicide is the most useful contribution to the book and provides a useful strategy for interviewing the patient and for negotiating a management plan. A further positive aspect is the production of the text itself – the paper is nicely textured and the layout utilises highlighted tables lavishly. It is regrettable that the content is so shallow.

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Options for Improving Patient Care in Schizophrenia. Edited by HUGH FREEMAN. London: Royal Society of Medicine Press. 1996. 57 pp. £10. ISBN 1-85315-288-9.

This book in the Round Table Series sets out to review the current model of care and the

effectiveness of the service. Alarm bells are immediately set ringing by the fact that no social worker could be persuaded to take part in this critical review. The editor draws attention to the fact that this itself reflects the problematic role that social services play in mental health in most parts of the country.

This multi-disciplinary Round Table discussion makes a brave attempt to provide a comprehensive and balanced review of the current status. Certain uncomfortable facts are highlighted. The enormous burden placed on family, voluntary workers and general practitioners is sharply focused. A plea is made for the hospital to remain an essential part of the integrated package offered to patients and their families. The introduction of new medications, with particular reference to clozapine, is discussed. Several people emphasised the real cost of community care and the need to judge the newer and more expensive drugs in this context. The reality facing purchasing organisations with limited resources and the need to define clear treatment goals and prioritise treatment programmes is clearly reviewed.

The improvements brought by community care is acknowledged and particularly that this is frequently preferred by patients and their families. In this context the results of research showing an increasing burden on general practitioners, families and carers, coupled with a trend for community psychiatric nurses to involve themselves in the less seriously ill revealed important areas requiring urgent review and adequate resources.

At times this review is uncomfortable and thought provoking. This book can be recommended to all who care for those suffering from severe mental illness and are interested in building a research-based system of treatment and rehabilitation embracing an integrated multi-disciplinary approach.

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Child and Adolescent Services. Young People and Protective Legislation. Safeguards for Young Minds. Edited by R. WILLIAMS and R. WHITE. London: Gaskell. 1996. 122 pp. £10 (pb). ISBN 0-902-241-94-X.

The past 15 years have seen a dramatic increase in the legal complications affecting the work of child and adolescent psychiatrists. The provisions of the 1983 Mental Health Act include no minimum age limit, and its use is often an alternative to the Children Act 1989 when a child, or more probably an adolescent, is