

## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

### **Textbook of Psychopharmacology (2nd edn)**

By A. F. Schatzberg and C. B. Nemeroff.  
Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.  
1998. 1095 pp. \$150.00 (hb).  
ISBN 0-88048-817-4

Although in recent years the demise of the traditional textbook has often been predicted and the Worldwide Web is ever threatening to drown us in information, the editors of the *Textbook of Psychopharmacology* found the response was "overwhelmingly positive" and have now produced this second edition. It is an impressively weighty volume and more than half as large again as Bloom and Kupfer's *Psychopharmacology: The Fourth Generation of Progress*. There are 120 contributors to 48 chapters divided into four sections. The first section, 'Principles of Psychopharmacology', covers the necessary theoretical background and will be a useful primer for trainees in psychiatry and excellent continuing professional development material for oldies who wish to refresh their understanding of signal transduction or who always wanted to know what an immediate early gene was, but were too afraid to ask!

The second section, 'Classes of Psychiatric Treatments: Animal and Human Pharmacology', is thoroughly comprehensive and up-to-date. Calcium channel antagonists, cognitive enhancers, stimulants and electroconvulsive therapy are also included. The third section, 'Clinical Psychobiology and Psychiatric Syndromes', reviews rather briefly the status of current findings in the major psychiatric disorders as well as Alzheimer's disease, eating disorders and personality disorders. This was the least satisfactory section with a somewhat superficial treatment of recent advances.

The fourth section, 'Psychopharmacological Treatment', reviews "state-of-the-art therapeutic approaches" and will be the most useful part of the book for practising clinicians on both sides of the Atlantic. It is a well organised section guiding the reader systematically through different syndromes

and the treatments of choice using many very useful tables. It is also clear that there is a growing convergence between North American and UK practice. For instance in delusional depression: "Antidepressant alone usually is ineffective. Antidepressant and antipsychotic combination is effective in many patients. Electroconvulsive therapy is probably the most effective treatment". Emergencies are dealt with by lorazepam or a combination of benzodiazepines and haloperidol. There are also excellent chapters on the treatment of agitation and aggression, the psychopharmacological management of the medically ill patient and psychopharmacology during pregnancy and lactation.

In such a burgeoning field it is impossible to have the last word but it is clear nevertheless that the textbook is alive and well. This particular one should be available in all psychiatric departmental libraries as well as in departments of psychology or pharmacology involved in teaching psychopharmacology. At \$150.00, however, it is more than individual trainees are likely to afford unless they have a special interest in the subject. As for myself I am glad to have it in my library and even more glad that I did not have to edit it!

**David J. King** Professor of Clinical Psychopharmacology, Department of Therapeutics and Pharmacology, Queen's University of Belfast, Whitle Medical Building, 97 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7BL

### **Psychotropic Handbook (7th edn)**

Edited by P. J. Perry, B. Alexander & B. I. Liskov. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press. 1996. 740 pp. £42.50.  
ISBN 0-88048-851-4

This book covers a broad range of psychoactive drugs including antipsychotics, antidepressants, antimanics, anxiolytics and drugs for the treatment of alcohol, drug dependence and extrapyramidal side-effects. It also has very good sections on drug interactions, management and treat-

ment of overdoses, management of withdrawal syndromes, narcotherapy (often missing from UK text books) and a small section on electroconvulsive therapy.

Each chapter has clear headings and definitions. The general structure for each chapter is the same and the use of bullet points makes the book very accessible, especially for reference purposes. It is well written and referenced. The book is up-to-date and contains information about recently launched drugs.

A review of the interactions between electroconvulsive therapy and psychoactive drugs (e.g. the effect on seizure length) would have been useful. In addition, there is no chapter devoted to anti-dementia drugs. In addition, a brief mention of the use of psychoactive drugs in special settings would also have been useful (e.g. medically ill, during pregnancy and lactation, and in the elderly). Although the terminology is American, this does not detract from the core message.

This book may be recommended for departmental libraries.

**Stephen Curran** Lecturer in Old Age Psychiatry, Division of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, Level 5, Clinical Sciences Building, St James's University Hospital, Leeds LS9 7TF

### **Child and Family Assessment: Clinical Guidelines for Practitioners (2nd edn)**

By Ian Wilkinson. London: Routledge. 1998.  
270 pp. £14.99 (pb). ISBN 0-415168-07-4

This revised and updated edition offers an individual view of the day-to-day process of child and family assessment. The author's solid and comprehensive experience and his common sense approach is set in the broader context of the current state of knowledge about family functioning, individual assessment of the child and the practice of family therapy.

The theory, practice and the author's extensive experience of distilling out a wealth of diverse factors into a usable teaching and training system will be welcomed by many practitioners, as the text offers prescriptive solutions to the process of child and family assessment. Whatever the specific family therapy approach it offers a particular framework from which to work.

Revision of any text can, and does, present difficulties. The strength of this text