

## Book review

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*Late-life Mood Disorders*. Edited by H. Lavretsky, M. Sajatovic, C. F. Reynolds III. (Pp. 770; £95.00; ISBN 9780199796816 hb.) Oxford University Press, 2013.

This new textbook is an authoritative presentation of our current understanding of mood disorders in older people. It addresses a gap in the market by presenting an up-to-date overview of our current state of knowledge in an expanding field of research. After five introductory chapters we have 38 main chapters in the four major sections: 'Diagnosis and Co-Morbid Conditions', 'Treatment and Prevention', 'Care Delivery Systems' and 'Neurobiology and Biomarkers'. The authors are drawn from leaders in the field from around the world and while most of them are US based this reflects the fact that most quality research and expertise emanates from there. Again it is inevitable, given its prevalence and dominance in mood disorders research that most chapters deal with late-life depression; only 13 focus on other conditions. A concern for readers internationally is that several chapters are very US-centric. For example chapter 3 (Epidemiology of late-life mood disorders) opens with 'As the largest generation in American history ...', determines later life as beginning at 60 rather than 65 because this is when US citizens become eligible for various services and benefits and throughout cites only US studies as evidence for the prevalence of mood disorders in different US healthcare and community settings. Although the preface does not state that the book is aimed at an international readership I presume the publisher and editors would like to attract such researchers and clinicians; however, this reviewer thinks this lack of engagement with non-US literature might limit the interest of such potential users.

The timing of this book is perhaps unfortunate as generally it works with DSM-IV with necessarily only tentative interactions with DSM-5 which was of course just published a few months after this book. Like any textbook nowadays it runs the risk of being dated by the time it is published and this is ironically, given the provenance of the editors and most authors, especially the case then in chapter 5 on classification. Here we read on page 70 'At the time of writing ...

as of June 2011' when discussing DSM-5 and this chapter is better read as a summary of the history of DSM and ICD than a critique of DSM-5 about which it says very little. Again, since bereavement and grief is a much more frequently encountered issue for people working with older adults it would have been useful to have had some discussion about the (controversial) removal of the bereavement criterion from Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) in DSM-5. There is, however, a well-written and researched separate chapter on 'Bereavement and Complicated Grief in Older Adults', which is good to see, and within this there is helpful discussion on bereavement where on page 228 we have an argument that MDD is clearly separate from grief: 'the two disorders have different risk factors, clinical correlates, temporal course and response to antidepressant medication and interpersonal therapy'.

Since age at depression onset is frequently regarded as a key issue and late-onset depression and early onset depression are usually thought to represent different conditions a separate chapter engaging with the evidence on this would have been good and would make a helpful addition to a future edition. This issue is dealt with briefly in chapter 6 along with other thoughtful reflections on difficulties and limitations on classifying depression in older adults. These authors and others also touch on a key issue for the field of depression research generally: our tendency to use the term depression loosely. Time after time 'depression' is used to refer to a cluster of research findings which used very different methods for determining 'depression'. The assumption is that the same entity has been studied even though authors in this volume (like this reviewer) think this is unlikely. While this book is guilty of this, as one also convicted of this error, the reviewer is not casting stones but it is an issue which needs addressing in depression research.

Overall this book is a fine addition to the psychiatric literature for people working with older adults with mental disorders. Notwithstanding the above concerns it is worth having on the bookshelf for the many chapters which are pertinent to anyone practising in this field.

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