

Book Reviews

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Perinatal Mental Health (2nd Edition): The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) Manual. Edited by John Cox, Jenny Holden and Carol Henshaw (242pp.; ISBN 978-1-909726-13-0). RCPsych Publications: London, 2014.

The Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS) is a scale that is extensively used throughout the world both as a screening instrument and as a validated research tool. This second edition of the book gives clear instructions on use of the EPDS. It also gives an overview of the symptoms of Postnatal Depression, its diagnosis, aetiology and management. It has a very useful chapter on the EPDS in clinical settings.

The authors make it clear that the EPDS should not be used by health professionals as a tick box exercise and emphasise that professionals need to be trained in the nature, detection and treatment of perinatal depression, in understanding the experiences of women and in developing listening skills so that they can elicit and respond to psychological issues. These include how to respond if women disclose suicidal ideation. There are reminders to service managers as well as to clinicians that health professionals including midwives and health visitors will need support to do this work.

The authors recommend the book for psychologists, psychiatrists, health visitors, midwives, family doctors, obstetricians and community psychiatric nurses plus researchers in perinatal mental health.

There are 213 pages in the book. Appendix 2 takes up 112 pages and comprises the EPDS itself and the EPDS scoring sheet translated into 57 other languages. If the forward to the book, the prefaces to the first and second editions, the pages of references, the index, and the 112 page Appendix are discounted, then what is left is quite a small book. It provides a good overall introduction to the subject, details on the scale itself and the scoring sheet and so will be very useful for those doing research in the area. However, for psychiatrists it also gives very good advice to professionals on the clinical limitations of the EPDS.

'The EPDS is clearly not a magic wand to be distributed for compulsory use without training. Alone, it is just a piece of paper, a checklist. Combined with training in prevention, detection, and treatment however, it becomes an important part of an effective programme'.

Professionals seeking more in-depth knowledge on postnatal depression and other perinatal issues will need to look elsewhere.

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The Doctor's Case. By Maurice Guéret (314 pp.; ISBN: 978-0-9927312-0-5) IMD: Dublin, 2014.

Medical life brings with it all kinds of opportunities and complexities, wonders and absurdities, joys and sorrows. Chronicling these myriad aspects of clinical practice is not as easy as it might sound. The medical writer requires an analytic mind, keen ear for the absurd and deep sense of compassion in order to do justice to the complicated contours of medical life and the privileged position enjoyed by practitioners.

Happily, Dr Maurice Guéret possesses all of these necessary qualities in generous abundance, as is amply evident in his new book, *The Doctor's Case*. This most welcome publication follows last year's *What the Doctor Saw*, which was a splendid compendium of reflections and observations on medicine in Ireland and the broader world; that volume comprised a satisfying diversity of pieces written by Dr Guéret between 2003 and 2013, some of which were unpublished while others had appeared elsewhere, especially in Dr Guéret's *Rude Health* column in the *Sunday Independent's Life Magazine*. The topics covered in *What the Doctor Saw* ranged from 'celebrity doctors' to 'syphilis', 'patient bloopers' to 'the Irish Daddy' and 'suicide bombers' to the 'Nobel Prize for Medicine'.

Now, *The Doctor's Case* sees Dr Guéret turn his analytic eye on another wealth of medical themes, ranging from competence assurance to the Stoker brothers, from 'defibrillator madness' to the life and work of Dr Jonathan Miller, the British opera and theatre director, actor, author, television presenter, humourist, sculptor and medical doctor. From the perspective of psychiatry, there are involving articles about Tourette syndrome, post-traumatic stress disorder and the much neglected topic of medical suicide. There is also a lovely addition to the literature on

romantic hospital fiction, an under-valued genre that clearly merits further contemplation and research.

Dr Guéret includes an especially involving piece about the 'seven sins of medicine', which were described by Dr Richard Asher (1912–1969), the British haematologist and endocrinologist, who also described and named Munchausen syndrome in the *Lancet* in 1951 (Asher, 1951). Asher identified the 'seven sins of medicine' as follow: obscurity (commonly mistaken for profundity), cruelty, bad manners, over-specialisation, spanophilia (a love of the rare), stupidity and sloth. This insightful list, although disturbing, is probably as relevant today as it was in Asher's era, and merits careful thought.

On the basis of this and many more similar pieces, *The Doctor's Case* is a fascinating read and worthy follow-up to *What the Doctor Saw*. The author, Dr Maurice Guéret, is very well placed to present medical observations and reflections such as these: he is a registered specialist in general practice, member of the Society of Medical Writers and was previously health columnist at *Image* magazine. His work has also appeared in various medical newspapers including the *Irish Medical News* and *Trinity Medical News*.

Consistent with this record, both of Dr Guéret's books demonstrate his keen sense of justice and fairness in healthcare, and his unerring eye for absurdity. What is most in evidence, however, is Dr Guéret's finely tuned

sense of what it means to be a doctor: first and foremost, what it means in terms of patient care, but also what it means in terms of public health policy, media discourse surrounding health and medicine, and the myriad other areas in which doctors become involved.

As a result, while much of this book is highly amusing and all of it very readable, there is an utter, utter seriousness at its heart: dedicated, reasonable, high-quality patient care lies at the very heart of medical practice and should remain at the centre of all aspects of clinical life. This sense of clinical dedication lies at the heart of both *What the Doctor Saw* and *The Doctor's Case*, and makes both books valuable additions to the medical literature. I look forward to the next instalment.

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