

The book will probably not find its way into the recommended reading list of psychiatrists or other mental health professionals working in the forensic field. Nevertheless it might have its place in the field this book is intended for: training and helping prison officers to understand the behaviour of prisoners and to help them to deal with the aggression, the distress and the difficulties of the prisoners in their charge.

HEINZ ALBRECHT, *Specialist Psychiatrist, Regional Forensic Services, Auckland Area Health Board, New Zealand*

Epidemiology and the Prevention of Mental Disorders.

Edited by BRIAN COOPER and THOMAS HELGASON.
London: Routledge. 1989. 367 pp. £40.00.

This is a compilation of reports and review articles presented at the ninth scientific symposium of the World Psychiatric Association's Section of Epidemiology and Community Psychiatry. The theme is prevention in psychiatry. The editors suggest that a cursory glance through the best known American and British textbooks suffices to show that "prevention remains today a grossly undervalued theme" in psychiatry. Sartorius, in his summary of the World Health Organization's view on prevention concurs – "work in the field of mental health is not seen as a public health effort and mental diseases are not considered a public health problem". In compiling these papers the editors are attempting to redress the balance with, as they put it, a "small but significant landmark in the development of psychiatric epidemiology as a public health discipline". How far do they succeed?

At first glance this book creates a 'heart-sink feeling' similar to that produced by some patients. There appears a disparate collection of articles, ranging from "the sociodemographic risk factors of depression in octogenarians" to "multilevel approaches to the prevention of mental disorders in the community: the Athenian experience". On the face of things, just another collection of loosely related topics gathering together data, much of which has been published elsewhere.

A closer inspection shows this to be a quite misleading impression. The editors must be congratulated on their skilful organisation of the material in line with their overall objectives. The introduction by Cooper gives a superb overview of the issues related to prevention in psychiatry; naive and grandiose designs for "transforming the health of the community" are firmly discarded, while the reader's enthusiasm is kindled for goals that are both realistic and attainable. The book is worth looking into for the introduction alone.

A series of papers are organised into six sections, each dealing with some aspect of prevention. Inevitably, given the variety of authors, the material varies considerably in both style and quality. The editors have

selected presentations of a generally high standard, however, and the chapters on vulnerability, the epidemiology of Alzheimer's disease and unravelling the causes of homelessness are notable.

Most readers will not wish to attempt to assimilate detailed data on so many widely differing subjects. This is perhaps a book to be dipped into rather than read from cover to cover. Nevertheless, the editors have probably succeeded in their ambition – this is a small but significant landmark in thinking about strategies for prevention in psychiatry.

GLYNN HARRISON, *Consultant Psychiatrist, Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital, Nottingham*

Clinical Pharmacology of Psychotherapeutic Drugs. (3rd

edn). By LEO E. HOLLISTER and JOHN G. CSERNANSKY.
London: Churchill Livingstone. 1990. 194 pp. £27.00.

The previous edition of this book appeared in 1983 and clearly it was due for a revision, given the changes in psychopharmacology over this time. The book is written jointly by the authors, thereby avoiding the problems of multiple authorship. It succeeds in its aim to provide a brief, readable and useful reference to the main groups of psychotropic drugs. The main problem for readers on this side of the Atlantic is that it is written from an American perspective with emphasis on DSM-III disorders, and the literature cited is predominantly from US sources. UK readers will find some differences in prescribing habits, for example, in the use of benzodiazepines, and will be frustrated that a number of drugs are not described because they are not available in the USA.

The book is divided into seven chapters, including a new chapter on the drug treatment of childhood disorders. Each chapter begins with a brief history of the drugs in question, followed by a discussion of the relevant disorders, their epidemiology, nosology and aetiology, and how our understanding of these disorders relates to psychopharmacology. The different types of old and new drugs are considered, in terms of their structure, pharmacokinetics, mode of action, dosages and dosage schedules, treatment duration, side-effects, effects of overdose, drug interactions and consideration of their uses clinically.

The first chapter provides a general overview. The second chapter on antianxiety drugs encompasses newer drugs, such as those acting on 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT) receptors. Although reasonable guidelines are provided for the prescription of benzodiazepines, they are viewed with less circumspection than in the UK and are considered appropriate in a number of disorders, including alcohol withdrawal, mild depression and schizophrenia. Chapter three deals with the pharmacotherapy of sleep disorders, although narcolepsy is not mentioned until the final chapter. The next chapter