

considerable potential. However, the case was described far too vaguely and there are too many approaches described in the book. This has led, perforce, to a great deal of padding and overlapping. Indeed, more than one contributor seems to need to apologise for the difficulties involved in applying their particular approach to the case. Some 14 approaches are described (e.g. psychodynamic, Adlerian, psychosocial, radical behaviourist, cognitive, and family therapy). In the third part of the book ('on meta-paradigms') the material really seems to take off into the realms of the more fanciful; the approaches described here include 'eco-systems', 'existential', and 'cybernetic epistemology'! The pretentious quality of some of the writing is exemplified by the following: "In this exposition of the constructivist-developmental paradigm, individuals have been presented as active agents who create meaning as they progress in their understanding of the physical, social and moral aspects of the world" (p. 351). Teachers of social work and counselling skills may find this work moderately useful for dipping into, but I cannot see busy psychiatric professionals on this side of the Atlantic finding much to help them in the stresses of their day-to-day practice. Those desiring a concise and relevant account of the essentials of the relationship between social work theory and practice, and more especially as this applies to the UK, would do better to consult *Theories of Practice in Social Work* (eds P. Hardiker & M. Barker, 1981, London, Academic Press).

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Electroconvulsive Therapy. By RICHARD ABRAMS. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1988. 231 pp. £25.00.

During the past decade there have been at least five books and one journal in the English language concerned solely with the topic of electroconvulsive therapy. This is surely a witness to the value of the treatment. In 1979 there appeared Max Fink's *Convulsive Therapy: Theory and Practice*, and Fink is now editor of the journal *Convulsive Therapy*. In 1981 papers read at a conference in Leicester University were edited by Palmer under the title *Electroconvulsive Therapy: An Appraisal*, and in 1982 Abrams, with Essman, edited another series of studies: *Electroconvulsive Therapy: Biological Foundations and Clinical Applications*. Also in that year, another single-author book appeared: *ECT - A Clinical Guide* by Morris Fraser, a clear instructional manual which followed the Pippard & Ellam report into practice in Great Britain. Now Abrams, a leading American author and researcher, has produced the present single-author text, which predates the guide to clinical practice in Britain, *The Practical Administration of ECT*, just published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Abrams presents a useful summary of the literature and research on the topic. A criterion for judging topicality is the proportion of references of recent origin, and the work passes this test superbly: of the 786 references, 24% refer to work published in the past five years.

So, what is new in theory and practice of the therapy? The answer is that there have been no radical changes in the past decade apart from a confirmation of the effectiveness of the treatment. On this point the author is unsure of his ground, referring to a recent spate of studies of effectiveness as impeccable in their methodology yet arriving at different conclusions. Having difficulty in defending the efficacy of the treatment in face of this disparity, he resorts to the argument that scientific researchers pick and choose data to suit their personal bias, a statement which is probably partly true but nonetheless astonishing for its abrupt utterance. He would have done better to underline the many confounding variables in outcome research and then rely on the meta-analysis of Janicak which pointed to the overwhelming evidence for effectiveness; for some reason he quotes that author only in the context of the laterality controversy.

On the topic of placement, Abrams comments that the introduction of unilateral ECT is the greatest technical advance since the introduction of the treatment; however, the greatest technical advance will probably prove to be the introduction of pulse wave delivery, reducing unwanted dysmnesia and so rendering the uncertain procedure of unilateral placement unnecessary.

The use of double ECT - two treatments in one session - is said to be a not unusual procedure in severely disturbed states; if so, and if it produces rapid relief of severe disturbance, then it is worth more attention than the one reference supplied.

Premedication with atropine is still advocated, although this is an unpleasant and unnecessary procedure. The author points out that ECT should be given more frequently on an out-patient basis, but states that this is seldom done in the United States; perhaps the College's guide on British practice, with its recommendation of an information leaflet, will modify that omission of a useful procedure in the United States also.

This book is recommended to those who wish for a convenient collection of the recent studies on the topic. It is not a useful guide for clinicians, at any rate on this side of the Atlantic.

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Jungian Child Psychotherapy. Edited by MARA SIDOLI & MIRANDA DAVIES. London: H. Karnac (Books) Ltd. 1988. 286 pp. £14.95.

The aims of the editors of this collection of papers were twofold: to pay tribute to Michael Fordham's creative