

In their discussion they are open and self-critical about working with severely disturbed patients and in this respect the chapter by Van der Plaats, "The expectations pattern" is very illuminating. This book increases the awareness of the medico-legal complexities and stimulates critical discussion. I would certainly recommend it to all those concerned in the forensic field, the only reservation being its high price.

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Psychological Aspects of Obesity: A Handbook. Edited by BENJAMIN B. WOLMAN. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold. 1982. Pp 318. £20.85.

This is a disappointing book. It provided an opportunity to examine the place of psychological factors in the development, maintenance and treatment of obesity. The book could have illuminated a confusing field which is bedevilled by unwarranted assumptions and conflicting research findings. Sadly, it merely adds to the confusion.

The book consists of 14 chapters on various aspects of obesity. It includes four chapters on psychodynamic issues and psychoanalytic approaches to treatment and a further three chapters on behavioural treatment methods. In addition there are chapters on biological factors, exercise, obesity in adolescence, the stigma of being overweight and the role of hypnotherapy as well as two chapters reviewing some of the experimental psychological research into obesity and overeating.

The quality of the contributions varies greatly. The majority are competent but unexciting reviews of material which has been presented in a more stimulating form elsewhere. Two exceptions are worth noting. Natalie Allon presents both a compelling and an informative survey of the literature on the social stigma of obesity. The chapter by Janet Wollershein is also of interest. She provides a detailed practical account of how to treat obese people in groups using an adaptation of the standardized behavioural programme for obesity.

This book would have benefitted from the addition of an explanatory preface in which the various contributions were related to one another. As it stands readers unfamiliar with the field are likely to be bewildered by the succession of chapters presenting seemingly contradictory ideas. Almost no attention is paid to the relationship between psychological and physical factors in the development and maintenance of obesity, and the significance of recent studies on eating behaviour goes unexplored. The relative neglect of the research into dietary restraint is particularly unfortunate since it has important practical

implications. The book fails to examine critically the claims of enthusiasts for particular treatment modalities. For example, it does not mention that weight losses of clinical significance achieved by behavioural measures are poorly maintained. It is also regrettable that there is no discussion of the studies which have combined psychological treatments with diet, drugs or exercise. In conclusion, this is an expensive book which fails to do justice to the breadth and complexity of its subject.

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Group and Family Therapy 1981. LEWIS R. WOLBERG and MARVIN L. ARONSON. New York: Brunner/Mazel. 1981. Pp 320. \$25.00.

The latest addition to this annual series contains a pot-pourri of papers which will have differential appeal according to the special interest of the reader. Perhaps the most notable chapters are those devoted to the works of the late Wilfred Bion to whom the volume is dedicated. A book to be dipped into in the library rather than purchased individually.

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Clinical Psychiatric Medicine. By ANDREW E. SLABY, LAURENCE R. TANCREDI and JULIAN LIEB. Philadelphia: Harper & Row. 1981. Pp 742. £17.50.

It is a pleasure to welcome this new text-book of psychiatry which is of medium size, concisely written and well edited yet packed with information. It is very readable and the emphatic style keeps one awake. Perhaps a confident approach is essential to good teaching but there are several instances of unjustifiable dogmatism. For example, the section on Biologic Psychiatry begins with the statement that "many illnesses to which psychological causes have been ascribed will, as their aetiology unfolds, reveal a primarily biochemical aetiology". Note the word "primarily" which suggests an inborn error of metabolism rather than a biochemical mediator. This approach would certainly have pleased the late Richard Hunter who is quoted several times.

One can of course find other statements with which to disagree, such as "treatment for panic anxiety states must rely primarily on medication" which will not please the devotees of relaxation or hypnosis. However, there is an overall sense of balance and moderation which commends the book as a solid foundation for clinical studies and as a source of reference.

Although there are sections on psychotherapy,

crisis intervention, and the like there is a general tendency towards an organic approach. Thus schizophrenia is covered in 27 pages whereas over 100 are devoted to organic syndromes. Indeed there is considerable detail on the more physical aspects of psychiatry and one might mention at random the useful sections on glue-sniffing and dementia pugilistica. There are full accounts of all major disorders yet the editors have managed to include details of such rarities as Wigtigo (in which the affected individual, usually an American Indian, believes that he is a cannibalistic monster). The book seems generally up to date, especially on the biological aspects of aetiology in general, and on prostaglandins in particular, though again one might take exception to "dysmenorrhoea and migraine are caused by excessive synthesis of prostaglandins".

Unfortunately the section on Psychiatry and the Law is concerned only with the American system, and similar problems arise with mental health services and the trade names of drugs.

Perhaps this is not a suitable book for the complete beginner in psychiatry but I strongly recommend it for Membership preparation and it should be available for reference in every library.

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Paradoxical Psychotherapy: Theory and Practise with Individuals, Couples, and Families. GERALD R. WEEKS and LUCIANO L'ABATE. New York: Brunner Mazel. 1982. Pp 268. \$20.00.

This book is designed to help all clinicians who are interested in learning more about the paradoxical approach to therapy and aims at giving an overall approach in individual, marital and family therapy settings. It traces the history of paradoxical psychotherapy in the Western World with special mention of Aldred Adler and Viktor Frankl. The broad concept of paradoxical intent, as Frankl calls it, has been known and practised by many, although as the authors point out, it has been a practice calling for a theory. Here the authors place the practice into an understandable theoretical framework.

I was struck by the omission of Fritz Pearls and many of the Gestalt techniques where the practice has been very much in use for many years. The emphasis on its use in the behavioural schools implies perhaps unjustly that they have made the most use of this approach. While the quotations from Frankl and others do mention the place of humour in working with the paradox, I felt that not sufficient emphasis was placed on this, to me, key factor. I am inclined to the fantasy that we take therapy and ourselves so seriously that the importance of humour as therapeutic

tool still finds too few adherents.

This is a refreshing book once you get through the historical background and one which presents an important contribution to therapeutic theory, especially in the field of marital and family therapy. The authors introduce us not only to the theory but also some novel methods of practice.

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Women Under Stress. By DONALD ROY MORSE and LAWRENCE M. FURST. Wokingham, Berkshire: Van Nostrand Reinhold. 1981. Pp 473. £17.00.

This is a fluent, racy, well-annotated and didactic American popular textbook which reviews stressors particularly affecting women.

Its authors, doctors respectively of dentistry and psychology, are committed to health education, psychosomatic theory and relaxation therapy. Their occasionally ungrammatical, often idiosyncratic but always readable book discourses on stress in relation to female anatomy, physiology, developmental psychology, sexuality, sociology, physical and mental illness and good and bad coping strategies. There is an excellent summary of defence mechanisms. The illustrative material ranges from line drawings and colourful anecdotal case-histories to extensive, though unobtrusive, references to learned journals.

The intended readership is hard to define. Much of the text, from the opening fictionalized account of a woman in whose life everything goes wrong to the closing questionnaire on personal vulnerability, seems to be addressed to laypersons seeking self-knowledge. However, the pages of bibliography are clearly directed at health professionals. Probably the book will be most useful as a multidisciplinary route-map along the middle ground traversed by social workers, nurses, lay therapists, careers advisers, marriage counsellors and teachers. But any doctor who reads it will learn things from it (particularly about dentistry, which makes frequent unexpected but pertinent appearances) and any general reader will be encouraged to explore further.

The authors' strong psychosomatic bias leads them to list among stress-induced diseases not only such established examples as hypertension and peptic ulcer but also others—dental caries, thrombophlebitis, breast cancer—whose inclusion is speculative to say the least. Medical readers will make the necessary reservations; others may suffer inappropriate guilt. Nevertheless *Women Under Stress* is a stimulating book, well-produced and not overpriced, which probably deserves a place in libraries.

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