

## Book Review

*Psychological Medicine*, 44 (2014).

doi:10.1017/S0033291713002699

First published online 31 October 2013

*Principles of Psychiatric Genetics*. Edited by J. I. Nurnberger Jr. and W. H. Berrettini. (Pp. 402; US\$140.00/£85.00; ISBN 978052189498). Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 2012.

In the preface to this book, the editors correctly alert readers to the emerging problems with current psychiatric disorder nosology and to the extraordinary pace of developments within the field that can make current findings rapidly out of date. The editors' aim was to target the book at specialists in biological psychiatry, human genetics and neuroscience but also practising clinicians and mental health clinicians in training. It is not clear that this book, or any other on the market for that matter, successfully achieves this noble aim. This book may not be basic enough for trainees and practising clinicians – but at the same time, not rigorous enough as a state-of-the-art book on principles.

The editors have brought together an impressive team of contributors covering a very wide range of topics – mostly with disorder-based headings. These include all the usual suspects; a chapter on the genetics of obesity and four separate chapters on addictions – alcohol, nicotine, opioids, and stimulants. However, the chapters vary considerably in their structure, content and length, making them difficult to dip in and out of. Some chapters are very detailed, for example, the chapter on schizophrenia genetics, while others are less so, such as the chapter on gene expression studies in psychiatric disorders.

The chapters on methodologies at the front of the book, in particular, are not sufficient in structure

and content for non-experts and are to some extent superfluous for experts, reflecting the conflict mentioned above – this is a difficult balance to achieve. An example is the treatment of linkage disequilibrium (LD). The term is used extensively throughout the book in relation to genetic association studies, but not properly explained in the early methodology chapters, and therefore confusing for readers with limited knowledge. Additional material on the principles of population and quantitative genetics would have been helpful additions to the introductory methodology chapters. At times, the coordination between chapters is poor, with for example, the principles of linkage and association being explained several times throughout the book.

There are some excellent chapters from high-profile contributors, such as, the chapters on personality traits, ethics and functional validation. Others are more variable and some less comprehensive and competent.

The layout is generally logical with some exceptions – the ethics chapter is between two disease-based chapters and might have been placed earlier or later in the book, and the colour plates are all together in the middle of a chapter on the genetics of major depression.

This book is to a large extent, a cross-sectional report covering current genetic knowledge on all major psychiatric and related disorders. It is highly suitable as a starting point for those who find themselves on the continuum between practising clinicians and specialists in biological psychiatry. It is a reference book for our times but may not be a comprehensive and lasting text on the principles of psychiatric genetics.

MICHAEL GILL  
(Email: mgill@tcd.ie)