

Textbook of Psychiatry (3rd edition) published in 1980 have recognized that it is far too unwieldy a work for most readers—particularly for medical students. Accordingly, they have now condensed it to less than one-quarter of its original length to produce this excellent *Modern Synopsis*.

Some of the original material has been deleted, but generally each chapter represents an accurate abridgement of the text in the larger work and the *Synopsis* as a whole therefore demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of its source.

The volume covers a much wider field than traditional textbooks of similar size. In addition to purely clinical topics such as the examination of psychiatric patients, the clinical manifestations of the various psychiatric disorders, psychological factors affecting physical conditions, psychiatric emergencies, psychotherapy and physical treatments, there are a number of sections on non-clinical fields which the editors consider to be fundamental to clinical skills and understanding: behavioural, biological and sociocultural sciences and theories of personality and of psychopathology. These latter topics are particularly well presented and are very likely to excite the readers' interest.

All this will be valued highly by the British reader, but clearly the book is an expression of the American approach, and particularly of the American system of classification of psychiatric disorders (DSM III). This may discourage the undergraduate medical student from using it as his standard text, as may the understandable references to the United States legal system, but for the postgraduate trainee who is willing to accept that the Americans have a great deal to offer, the *Synopsis* might be his choice.

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Drugs and Appetite. Edited by T. SILVERSTONE. London: Academic Press. 1982. Pp 187. £14.20.

This book is largely concerned with the pharmacology and clinical use of appetite suppressants. All its contributors are recognised authorities in their fields. It is comprehensive in its scope embracing both animal and human studies.

The first two chapters review the physiology and neuropharmacology of feeding. There follows a sophisticated analysis by Blundell of the effects of drugs on individual elements of feeding behaviour. The remainder of the book is concerned with humans. There are chapters on the measurement of hunger and food intake, as well as the clinical pharmacology of appetite suppressants and appetite stimulants. Of most interest to the clinician is the chapter on the place of drugs in the treatment of obesity. Munro and Ford rightly conclude that the indications for pharmacological treatment are ill-defined. They suggest that the conventional use of anorectic drugs for a period of three or so months can only be justified in significantly obese patients in whom there is a clear short-term benefit. They argue against long-term use except in cases where obesity is directly or indirectly a definite threat to the patient's health. The final chapter by Szmukler discusses the use of drugs in the treatment of anorexia nervosa. Not surprisingly, he concludes that drugs have a minor role in the overall management of these patients.

This book is a specialist text. It is authoritative and up-to-date, and it can be recommended to those interested in the effects of drugs on appetite. At times, however, it is unnecessarily pretentious and nowhere more so than when psycholinguistic analogies are used to describe the process of feeding. Absurdities also creep in: for example, with reference to the rat it is stated that 'Although laboratory animals appear to have time to spare, spending much of their days resting and relaxing,...all organisms have obligations to fulfil and commitments to meet'. Who would be a rat these days?

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