

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,