

Depression in Neurologic Disorders: Diagnosis and Management

Edited by Andres M. Kanner

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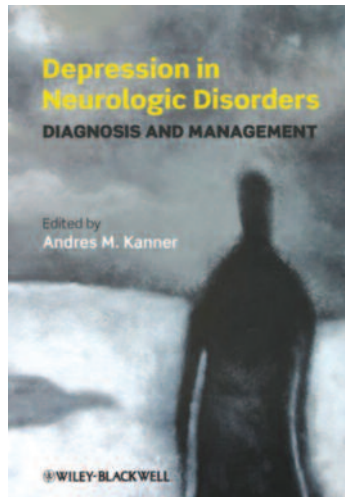
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Psychiatry and neurology have a shared, tumultuous past. After a harmonious marriage of minds until the early part of the twentieth century, irreconcilable differences ultimately resulted in mutually painful divorce. Neurology laid claim to those disorders of the central nervous system with demonstrable anatomical pathology, while psychiatry pursued diseases of the mind with its more abstract psychopathology. The emergence of Freudian analysis and insight-orientated psychotherapy, particularly in the United States, gave rise to the dichotomies of 'brain versus mind' and 'organic versus functional', serving to further alienate psychiatry from neurology and, indeed, mainstream medicine.

Thankfully, times have changed and unprecedented developments in the last four decades have redefined many major psychiatric illnesses as biologically based diseases. Novel neuroimaging techniques and insights into neuroplasticity have shed light on intricacies of brain structure and function. However, despite these developments, and despite the expansion of liaison psychiatry and the development of disciplines such as neuropsychiatry, the specialties continue to lead separate lives. This is reflected in the absence of overlap of the disciplines in their respective training programs.

Depression in Neurologic Disorders: Diagnosis and Management is a comprehensive overview of the biological basis of depression, its complex yet close relationship to neurological disorders, and offers a practical approach to diagnosis and management. The text, intended for neurologists, attempts to highlight a large and striking blindspot for comorbid depression in neurological evaluation. The opening chapter, provocatively entitled 'Why Should Neurologists Care?', reviews the impact of depression on the course and prognosis of neurological disorders. The evidence from an exhaustive literature search is presented in a concise, logical manner and is commendably devoid of opinion or conjecture. The remainder of Part One of the book explores the neurobiological and neuropsychological aspects of depression, as well as the general approach to diagnosis and management.

Part Two focuses on the specific aspects of depression in major neurological disorders, including migraine, stroke, epilepsy, movement disorders and multiple sclerosis. The well-organised text includes sections on epidemiology, pathogenic mechanisms, clinical manifestations and management. The chapters are orientated towards clinical practice and the neurologist is encouraged to use specific, tailored screening instruments which assist in identifying depression associated with particular neurological disorders. Guidance is offered in relation to the relative merits of one antidepressant versus another in a given



scenario and, where evidence is lacking, recommendations are made based on pharmacodynamic principles. Each chapter ends with a case study illustrating the ambiguity of symptoms at the interface of psychiatry and neurology as well the complexity of management in this setting. The chapters focusing on depressive disorders in epilepsy, movement disorders and traumatic brain injury are particularly compelling.

The book is a collaborative work of psychiatrists, neurologists and neuropsychiatrists. Herein lies both a strength and a weakness of the guide. While each of the authors offers fresh insight, the component chapters lack cohesion and the message is often repetitive. The text is dense and a more generous use of illustrations, figures and tables would have been often welcome. Reference is emphasised at the expense of readability.

The anxious, depressed, and worried are the stock in trade of neurological practice. The editor, Andres M. Kanner, argues nonetheless that depression remains largely unrecognized and untreated in this setting, with neurologists primarily focusing on objective signs of 'organic' disease. The evidence presented here is impossible to dispute and Kanner and his collaborators have provided an eminently practical guide for neurologists.

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