



professionalism, therapist gender issues, purpose of assessment, management of derogatory language, as well as questioning styles and the avoidance of a confrontational approach.

Overall, this is a highly useful tool for professionals working with sex offenders or within the criminal justice system. However, the DVD did not provide the viewer with a specific structure for conducting interviews, nor did it provide

any information on risk assessment tools, details of sex offender treatment programmes and their modalities. Disappointingly, there was no literature with the DVD to cover these areas, although the further reading section did provide pertinent references. This DVD is useful but the viewer would benefit from other educational material and programmes to ensure that they gain the necessary knowledge. Clearly the assessment

process is complex and, as one of the discussion group members highlighted, assessment falls into several areas including: risk, treatment need and treatability. The DVD only partly covers this area but does so via a medium that is both useful and unique.

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reading about

Reading about self-help books on women's mental health

This article focuses on books offering information or self-help programmes and memoirs of women's experiences of mental disorder and the help they have received. We are a psychiatrist with an interest in women's mental health and a health professional who experienced severe mental illness following the birth of her first child. Some of the books cited are American, hence drug names may differ and lists of useful addresses or service descriptions will be those in the USA.

Most available books focus on anxiety and depressive disorders. However, there are a few exceptions which we describe here first. *The Broken Mirror* (Phillips, 1998) is based on the experience of a woman with body dysmorphic disorder and draws on the clinical experience of the author. Women with this uncommon condition may find comfort in reading about the experiences of others and learning about treatments that can be effective. More women than men suffer from trichotillomania and Fred Penzel's book *The Hair-Pulling Problem* (2003) includes information on interventions, aids the reader in designing a self-help programme, has rating scales that the reader can complete and is relatively jargon free.

Anxiety and depression

Overcoming Panic Disorder: A Woman's Guide (Weinstock & Gilman, 1998) describes the stories of four women and provides information about available help and how to access it. The focus is on recovery and gaining control over panic. *When Words Are Not Enough: The Woman's Guide to Treatments for Anxiety and Depression: How to Choose What's Right for You* (Raskin, 1999) explains these disorders in non-technical language. It gives details of treatment options, causes, common symptoms, how diagnoses are

made and how various medications work. There is also information on how medication may affect women's bodies during menstruation, pregnancy and breast-feeding, and advice on side-effects. A 20-step programme (loosely based on cognitive-behavioural therapy) is described in *Women and Anxiety: A Step-by-Step Program for Managing Anxiety and Depression* (DeRosis, 1998). *The Deepest Blue: How Women Face and Overcome Depression* (Dockett, 2001) describes the experience of becoming depressed, the biology, the associated stigma, the role of family and friends, drug treatments and recovery using the stories of 30 women. Each chapter invites the reader to reflect on the material in relation to her own experience. For the woman who is a practising Christian, *Unveiling Depression in Women: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Overcoming Depression* (Hart & Weber, 2002) is a very balanced and comprehensive account of depression (including drug, psychological and complementary therapies) with an added spiritual perspective. Sheffield (2000) uses her own experience as the child of a mother with depression who became depressed herself to discuss how to recognise depression at various stages of life and how to overcome it.

For women who want to know more about the brain and biological aspects of anxiety and depression, *Women's Moods: What Every Woman Must Know About Hormones, the Brain, and Emotional Health* (Sichel & Watson Driscoll, 2000) is an easy-to-read text focusing on the biochemical basis of anxiety and depression and on drug treatments. It does attempt to describe a more holistic step-by-step programme but the text is still largely focused on drug treatment.

Few books are aimed at women from minority ethnic groups but there are two written by African-American authors. *Soothe Your Nerves: The Black Woman's Guide to Understanding Anxiety, Panic and Fear* (Neal-Barnett, 2003) contains personal stories and a guide to panic disorders, which describes how they are

diagnosed and suggests treatments and therapies for relieving the symptoms. *Willow Weep for Me: A Black Woman's Journey Through Depression* (Danquah, 1999) is a personal account.

Perinatal mental disorder

There are several books on perinatal mental disorder, most of which focus on non-psychiatric depression. However, *Out of Me* (Shaw, 2001) is an account of the author's severe depressive illness that began after the birth of her second child and required hospitalisation and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). The author has a supportive husband, is well educated, lives in comfortable surroundings and has a history of an eating disorder. This study is unlikely to help women who are currently ill but may be useful to read on recovery and help those with severe illness feel less unique. More recently, Elaine Hanzak published her memoir of her experience and treatment for puerperal psychosis (including ECT) entitled *Eyes Without Sparkle: A Journey Through Postnatal Illness* (Hanzak, 2005).

Shaila Misri's book *Shouldn't I be Happy?* (2001) covers a range of mental health problems related to normal and problematic pregnancies and deliveries. It has over 300 pages and although it is hard to dip into, it has good sections on perinatal loss and bereavement, the roles of professionals and what to expect from therapy and ECT. However, the section on drugs is outdated. *Surviving the Baby Blues: Recognising and Overcoming Postnatal Depression* (Fienmann, 1997) has a good description of postnatal depression and briefly describes puerperal psychosis, with case vignettes, aetiological factors and interventions. There are sections about mother and baby units, the role of professionals, returning to work, and looking after yourself, plus a list of organisations offering help. The *National Childbirth Trust Book of Postnatal Depression* (Welford, 1998) stresses that postnatal depression 'doesn't care who it hits' and focuses on the management of



depression in the community. The section on the impact of postnatal depression on child development may distress mothers and induce guilt. The drug information is outdated but addresses of organisations that may offer help or information are provided. *Antenatal and Postnatal Depression* (Curham, 2000) covers depression during pregnancy as well as after the birth.

Marie Osmond has written about her experience of postnatal depression in *Behind the Smile: My Journey Out of Postpartum Depression* (Osmond, 2001). Although many mothers will identify with her experiences, the short section written by her physician focuses too heavily on hormonal imbalances. Another celebrity book is *Down Came the Rain: My Journey Through Postpartum Depression* (Shields, 2005). The criticism of Brooke Shields's use of antidepressants by a fellow actor sparked some media debate about interventions. Susan Resnick (2001) has written a book describing her experiences of postnatal depression with anxiety and insomnia after the birth of her second child. Mauthner (2002) interviewed 35 mothers who contrast their experience of postnatal depression with popular stereotypes of fulfilled happy motherhood. Aiken (2000) uses the stories of ten women to provide positive suggestions and practical advice. *Depression After Childbirth* (Dalton & Holden, 2001) remains popular but focuses on postnatal depression as a hormonal imbalance requiring treatment with hormones. The chapter on infanticide and homicide may frighten some mothers with depression.

Websites

Action on Puerperal Psychosis (<http://www.neuroscience.bham.ac.uk/research/app/>) was established by the University of Birmingham and is a network of women who have experienced puerperal psychosis and are willing to receive

correspondence about research projects. It has a regular newsletter which includes personal stories (very helpful if you have had a rare disorder), but some of the reports on recent research are written in fairly technical language that might make this section less accessible to some women.

Several generic parenting sites also include sections on postnatal illness. These include BabyCentre (<http://www.babycentre.co.uk>), which has a bulletin board on postnatal depression, ReadySteadyBaby (<http://www.hebs.scot.nhs.uk/readysteadybaby/index.htm>) and the BBC Parenting site (http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/having_a_baby/). The Association for Post-natal Illness (<http://www.apni.org>) provides a telephone support line and Postpartum Support International (<http://www.postpartum.net>) also has some useful information. Liz Wise has produced a video on postnatal depression, which is available via the PND Productions website (<http://www.postnataldepression.com>).

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WELFORD, H. (1998) *NCT Book of Postnatal Depression. Helping You Through a Difficult Time*. Wellingborough: Thorsons HarperCollins.

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