

## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

### Seminars in Psychosexual Disorders

Edited by H. Freeman, I. Pullen, G. Stein and G. Wilkinson. London: Gaskell. 1998. 216 pp. £15.00 (pb). ISBN 1-901242-03-X

The enormous interest, and publicity, sildenafil citrate has received over the past months has brought the assessment and treatment of sexual dysfunction to the fore. Whereas previously psychiatrists may have pursued an academic interest in such an area, the plethora of treatments currently available (including intracavernosal injections, yohimbine, testosterone, intra-urethral injections, vacuum constriction devices and sildenafil citrate) have pushed sex therapy, and especially erectile dysfunction, into the clinical domain. The great British public are owning up to 'problems down below', and are actively seeking treatment. Previously their embarrassment or lack of credible treatments kept them at home and unsatisfied. Being on sildenafil citrate has quickly become acceptable, possibly even 'manly', so completely has the social stigma of impotence been undermined. As a result, it is incumbent on the doctor, be they general practitioner, urologist or psychiatrist to be fully informed about the full range of psychosexual disorders. The timely publication of this book will fill the gaps of knowledge for those who feel lacking. The book is primarily aimed at junior doctors in their training years, as are the other nine in the College Seminars series. As such it could be viewed as a textbook. It offers detailed factual information about, for instance, the neuroendocrine basis of sexuality, gender development, medical and surgical causes of sexual dysfunction, physical treatments for dysfunction, sexual therapy and relationship counselling. Yet in among the facts are thought-provoking chapters on areas not normally covered in textbooks. Issues concerning the sexuality of mentally disordered patients in hospitals are fully explored. Childhood sexual abuse is discussed, as is false memory syndrome. Other

chapters are lighter in nature, but equally illuminating and provocative. A chapter on the history of socio-medical attitudes towards sexual behaviours starts with the ancient Greeks and ends with Masters and Johnson, taking in spermaticidal anxiety, Darwin, Freud, John Kellogg and his daily enema, masturbatory induced insanity, Wilhelm Reich's orgone box for collecting sexual energy and Kinsey along the way. There are chapters on paraphilias as well as transgenderism. The final section gives 'hands on' examples of sexual and relationship therapy with detailed case studies and associated treatments. This section is particularly helpful from a practical point of view, as couples' difficulties never quite fit into neat classifications and treatment regimes.

In summary, although aimed at junior doctors, this book goes beyond what one would normally expect in a textbook. It has a particular emphasis on paraphilias, with both academic and clinical chapters on the subject as well as a separate bibliography of further reading. Mainstream and specialised case studies bring alive the dilemmas apparent in working with such problems. It is both thought-provoking and educational, detailed and humorous and accessible to both the professional and the lay person.

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### Disorders of Brain and Mind

Edited by Maria A. Ron & Anthony S. David. 1998. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 373 pp (hb). ISBN 0-521-473006-3

Too many psychiatrists have an anti-psychiatric scepticism about biological psychiatry that is borne of ignorance of the scientific process. This was compounded,

until recently, by the fact that psychiatry – unlike the rest of medicine – did not have a readily identifiable basic science. The decade of the brain has seen the development of cognitive neuroscience which is, among other things, a basic science for psychiatry. Training and trained psychiatrists therefore need to stay up to date with recent developments in neuroscience, both to pass exams and to be able to communicate important findings to their patients. This is easier said than done. Neuroscience has a massive and expanding knowledge-base that is often difficult to follow for even the most avid of specialists, let alone the (dis)interested amateur. Relevant papers are published in a bewildering array of journals, are usually highly technical and often difficult to follow. The few books that are available tend to be prohibitively large. This book is the answer to these dilemmas.

Most of the neuroscience that is relevant to psychiatrists, or likely to be in the foreseeable future, is here. The book is particularly strong on cognitive neuropsychology but also has many excellent chapters on behavioural pharmacology, neuroimaging and the neurodevelopmental approach to schizophrenia. The major psychoses, epilepsy, amnesia and structural brain disease are all covered. The best, and wonderfully simple, aspect of this book is the regular pairing of a relatively basic neuroscience chapter with one of more direct clinical relevance. Indeed, my only substantial criticism of the book is that this innovative and very effective scheme was not followed throughout. I would have liked to have seen more on molecular biology, normal brain development and ageing, functional imaging and the affective disorders, but it would be difficult to include everything and keep the book from getting too big.

This is without doubt the best introduction to neuroscience for psychiatrists. Not only that, it is attractively presented, rests pleasingly in the hand and is printed on high-quality paper that even smells rather pleasant. Get your librarian to order a copy and read it before anyone else does! Better still, buy your own copy.

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