

Risk Assessment: A Practitioner's Guide to Predicting Harmful Behaviour

By Bryony Moore. London: Whiting & Birch Ltd. 1996. 148 pp. £12.95 (pb). ISBN-1-871177-84-7

This book is packed with useful insights and information about an important area of clinical work. It represents an amalgam of years of professional experience, study and research in the management of offenders and the assessment of risk.

Bryony Moore is clearly well qualified to write on this topic and does so by outlining an excellent interactive framework for the assessment of risk and prediction of harmful behaviour. The book is divided into four sections covering the contextual theory behind risk assessment; the factors to be taken into account in assessing individual risk; the factors to be considered in applied risk, namely the influence of a known environment on harmful behaviour; and finally, an overview including a risk assessment check-list and useful notes on presenting conclusions in a professional way.

The text is well balanced and appropriately interspersed with clinical case examples. The book is written for the professional whose work involves predicting the behaviour of others and would be a useful addition to any departmental library.

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Textbook of Psychiatry

Edited by Linford Rees, Maurice Lipsedge & Chris Ball. London: Arnold. 1996. 243 pp. £16.99 (pb). ISBN 0-340-57195-0

The medical school curriculum is undergoing reform with division into core and specialist knowledge and increased emphasis on skills, understanding and attitudes. This textbook reflects these changes, as well as clinical developments such as community care.

Psychiatry is introduced with chapters on interviewing and classification which avoid abstruse phenomenology and instead stress the importance of the doctor-patient relationship and the value of differential

diagnosis. Classification tends to follow DSM-IV, favoured because it provides the clearest criteria for each disorder.

The main chapters on general adult and old age psychiatry are written by the editors from Guy's Hospital, whereas chapters on genetics, child psychiatry, learning disability and psychotherapy are provided by specialist contributors. This ensures a consistent style in most of the text, with summary points in review lists and boxes. The content is practical and topics discussed include the Care Programme Approach, writing court reports and a clear chapter on the Mental Health Act.

However, in order to cover the main psychiatric disorders in a slim volume, important aspects are covered with such brevity that understanding may be hindered rather than promoted. This may prove the greatest drawback of the new student curriculum. With this reservation, I would recommend this book to students who want an up-to-date summary of clinical psychiatry.

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