

Book Reviews

TREATMENT

Current Psychiatric Therapies. Edited by JULES MASSERMAN. London: Grune and Stratton. 1974. Pp. xiii+285. Index 13 pp. Price £10.30.

This is Volume 14 in a series which is published annually and aims 'to reflect the eclectic trends of the times'. There are sections on the treatment of children and adolescents, behavioural techniques for adult conditions, aesthetic therapies (comprising poetry, music and dance), psychopharmacology and addictions, family and group therapies, and community services. Most of the articles are short and do no more than give a brief sketch of some techniques currently employed in each area. For example, the behavioural approach to depression is represented by reinforcement of non-depressive behaviours such as smiling, and of positive self-evaluative thoughts. This is in no sense a recipe book from which the psychiatrist wishing to update his techniques could work. It merely serves to inform the reader of the more recent innovations that have been made in a variety of fields. Some of the sections achieve this aim much more successfully than others. The section on psychopharmacology and addictions is by far the best, with comprehensive and detailed articles on the rehabilitation of addicts and the management of epilepsy. The chapter on the treatment of depression is also relatively good but pays scant attention to maintenance therapy with lithium and tricyclics.

By contrast it is hard to extract anything of value from the section on Family and Group Therapies. A few pages each on crisis intervention with families and the use of a telephone service, with half a page on pitfalls and problems, hardly does the topics justice. Community services get even less of a look in.

The author of the chapter on sex therapy states that 'none of the methods currently used in the treatment of sexual disorders, including psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, has been adequately evaluated under controlled conditions'. This rider could be added to virtually every chapter in the book, but the reader will pick up very few hints of this from the text. One new advance in group therapy is particularly eye-catching in this respect, as it adds to the psychiatric armamentarium a technique that went out with the stocks—public derision. 'Signs reading "I want my mommie" or "I am a very important person" may be seen hanging round a

new member's neck. A member who defends another being confronted in a "game" is given a Red Cross hat to wear . . . A member who forgets a dental appointment must compose a singing apology, audition it before the Family, and then sing it to the dental staff'. Happily, only two of the fifteen cases with a history of previous psychotic episode became overtly psychotic while in the programme. Apart from this reassuring statistic, the results of the technique are dealt with in ten lines in which no results are given.

J. P. LEFF.

DIAGNOSIS

Psychiatric Diagnosis. By R. A. WOODRUFF, D. W. GOODWIN and S. B. GUZE. Oxford University Press. 1974. Pp. xii+212. Index 9 pp. Price £2.50 (paperback).

For over twenty years the St. Louis school of psychiatry has been striving with single-minded determination to put clinical psychiatry on a more secure and scientific basis by identifying, defining and validating stable clinical syndromes from amongst the welter of conflicting labels and classifications available to us. With a sublime disregard for their neighbours, who have mostly been more interested in psychodynamic mechanisms and social influences, the St. Louis school has steadily pursued its self-appointed task of finding out, mainly by family and follow-up studies, which syndromes are sufficiently stable and discrete to deserve recognition, and which are not. This book marks, if not the culmination, at least the solid achievements of these labours. The twelve diagnostic categories the authors consider they have succeeded in validating are described in succession, with a chapter for each, and these are followed by a reasoned defence of the disease concept in psychiatry and an exposition of the authors' philosophy. This consists of a commendable suspicion of all theories, assumptions and novelties, combined with a curiously old-fashioned, almost Kraepelinian disregard for social and psychological influences.

Unfortunately the book tends to fall between two stools. Although the blurb recommends it as 'invaluable' for medical students, sociologists and psychiatric social workers, and although it contains simple descriptions of, for example, how ECT and