

battles for all concerned. It is also argued that whatever post-divorce arrangements are made for children should be monitored and evaluated. With the high rate of remarriage the author has also reviewed work in this area, as clinicians often find themselves working with such families.

The second half of the book presents various models of intervention, including individual, group, and family therapy. Each approach is carefully considered and illustrated. At the end of the book Hodges provides a list of things that are not known and need to be known when helping children of divorce: there are thus plenty of suggestions for future research.

This book is well written and easy to use as a reference book – in view of the price this seems the most likely use. The fact that the research and practices reported are from America should not deter the British reader.

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Attempted Suicide: A Practical Guide to its Nature and Management (2nd ed). By KEITH HAWTON and JOSE CATALAN. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987. Pp 211. £12.50.

The second edition of this readable book is a little larger than the first. Its main format remains the same, and it is still the most useful basic text on 'attempted suicide' which is currently available. It is valuable at several levels, from a basic guide to practical management to a good summary of recent research work.

The new additions to the text reflect various recent changes in the clinical scene. Problems concerning unemployment, child abuse, adolescence, the role of psychotropic drug prescription, and up-to-date epidemiological findings are discussed in detail. The new DHSS guidelines on the management of deliberate self-harm are also mentioned, although it would have been useful to see them in their entirety. One omission concerns the recommendations that multidisciplinary standing committees should be established in each major clinical centre, charged with the tasks of monitoring standards of care and establishing codes of clinical practice, as well as methods of education and stimulating research. One wonders how widely this idea has been implemented throughout the country.

The book closes with consideration of the way forward and the many problems which beset primary prevention of 'attempted suicide'. It is indeed a source of disappointment that no research has yet shown any form of intervention to be effective in reducing repetition, and we are still in the early stages of identifying key issues in primary prevention of 'attempted suicide'. The exhausted casualty officer, facing yet another overdose patient, may still feel justified in believing that punitive stomach washouts could be effective as a way of preventing further repetition. In due course further enquiry

will surely prove him wrong, and any aspiring researcher will find within this book many good ideas which deserve further exploration.

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In-Patient Psychiatry: Diagnosis and Treatment (2nd edition). Edited by LLOYD I. SEDERER. London: Williams & Wilkins. 1986. Pp 399. £45.00.

At a time when community psychiatry is fashionable it is curiously anachronistic to find a book which is almost entirely devoted to in-patient psychiatry. Yet even day-patient care receives only a brief comment here. The narrow focus does enable certain aspects of in-patient care to be discussed in more detail than is found in general psychiatric textbooks, but the multi-author nature of the book has resulted in a considerable amount of repetition. Young psychiatric trainees are often puzzled by what actually happens in a psychiatric ward and may be uncertain about how they should spend the individual time that they have with their patients, what community and staff meetings are about, and what the aims of in-patient group psychotherapy should be. Some attempt is made here to provide the psychiatrist in training with advice and clear guidelines, and the chapters devoted to group therapy, the therapeutic milieu, and the family are particularly well-written.

Unfortunately, much of the detailed factual information one would also expect to find in such a text is only sketchily presented, and there is much that British psychiatrists would take issue with; for example, the chapter on schizophrenia uncritically presents the views of such workers as Wynne and Singer, and is heavily biased towards psychotherapeutic management. Somewhat paradoxically, another chapter, devoted to the use of the laboratory, dogmatically recommends a number of "diagnostic" biochemical tests such as the dexamethasone suppression test, again without discussing any of the controversy surrounding their use. Considering that the book is dealing with in-patient treatment, ECT is dealt with inadequately and cognitive therapy only briefly mentioned. One is left to wonder whether this is to be thought of exclusively as an out-patient technique! The chapter on alcoholism fails to discuss aims other than abstinence in any depth, and the drug addictions are notable by their absence altogether.

Overall, the book would be of limited value to those preparing for the membership examination, but the sections dealing with interpersonal and social aspects of in-patient care probably make it a worthwhile addition to a psychiatric library.

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