

Book review

Psychological Medicine, 41 (2011).

doi:10.1017/S0033291711000420

First published online 22 March 2011

Manual of Inpatient Psychiatry. By M. I. Casher and J. D. Bess. (Pp. 168; £29.99; ISBN 978-0-521-14154-3 pb.) Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 2010.

This book is a 168-page soft-cover book and one is immediately intrigued by its size and portability. To its merit this volume is a compact clinical guide that can easily be carried and accessed in ones' day-to-day clinical practice.

In terms of the layout of the book, the font size is small and this coupled with the single spacing can make it difficult to read, but the text is concise and contains a surprising amount of information. It is conversational in style, aiming above all at the day-to-day practice of inpatient psychiatry and the common clinical dilemmas one faces. The book feels like it is logically written and is geared towards the accessibility of the content.

The book has nine chapters most of which look at the commonest diagnoses and clinical presentations found on inpatient psychiatric wards. Each chapter has many subsections and subheadings, which make assimilation easy. There are also numerous tables and flow diagrams in the book which make for easy reading and quick consultation. In addition, issues relating to inpatient psychiatry are captured succinctly by some clinical scenarios.

The final chapter on clinical documentation provides a sensible conclusion to the concise journey through inpatient psychiatry. Once again easy reference tables succinctly summarize and emphasize points of relevance, and there is some guidance on medico-legal aspects of inpatient psychiatry.

Most chapters do make reference to some of the available evidence and define the evidence base to a degree, but the strength of this manual lies more in the depth of clinical advice provided. The interesting observations that have been presented in the context of the authors' vast clinical experience are particularly useful and aspects outlined are invaluable especially

for the trainee who is relatively new to inpatient psychiatry.

It would have been useful to have had a streamlined synopsis on the approach to the management of other special groups of patients including the patient who needs more intensive psychiatric care, the patient with a learning disability and an approach to the management of the under-18 age group. Although risk assessment is touched upon in various chapters, it would be helpful, especially from a trainee point of view, to have a chapter focusing on risk assessments. This would, in my opinion, make the book more comprehensive as a manual of inpatient psychiatry.

However, it must also be said that in a book of such brevity, covering a large area of psychiatry, a basic knowledge and understanding of psychiatry including classification, psychopathology and pharmacology is essential prior to using this book, as it assumes a baseline grounding in and knowledge of psychiatry. The book provides more of a basic clinical guidance rather than an exhaustive review of each of the disorders and this should be borne in mind.

There are also differences between the UK and USA in guidelines for the management and treatment of psychiatric conditions, including pharmacological management. The reader needs to be aware of the management that is practised in their own locality and of local guidelines and protocols which may vary from that outlined in the book.

The cost of the book may also be an issue at £29.99, as some might find this expensive, particularly the psychiatric trainee.

Overall the book provides a mixture of some theory, clinical evidence, and valuable clinical experience which makes for an interesting read. This is an engaging short text, which does not set out to be a reference guide, but is more of a friendly and structured guide to inpatient psychiatry which I think most trainees would find useful.

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