

approach to classification of depression and its epidemiological investigation. Expectations for combating depression seemed to the reviewer to be somewhat naive in the light of the almost negligible psychiatric manpower in the underdeveloped countries. Pharmacological assessment and investigations are still in an embryonic stage and treatment, despite the development of drugs, largely empirical.

There is advantage in the new classifications for epidemiological studies. Amongst the interesting concepts expressed were cultural differences in depressive content with less guilt and conscience in the African countries and underprivileged groups. One surprising feature was a paper from Japan which finds that patients on maintenance therapy showed a higher rate of relapse and a great impairment of social adjustment than those without maintenance therapy during the 5 year period of follow-up. The assessment, however, was not a prospective study and distribution, which was not a random distribution, may have weighted the maintenance group with severe cases.

On the whole the book is an interesting collection of papers with potential for better identification and classification of depression but with over-optimistic expectation for success in the scene of prevention and treatment. The very good bibliography following each chapter in itself makes the book worth purchasing for library use.

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**Stressful Life Events and their Contexts.** Edited by **BARBARA SNELL DOHRENWEND**. New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications. 1981. Pp 287. \$12.95.

With this publication life events research comes of age. The honeymoon period of naively attempting to link external happenings and psychosocial disruption or breakdown is over, and this book, which includes contributions by many experts in the field, explains why. What is an event? How should events be defined? Can they validly be measured by a simple scale such as that associated with Rahe, or do they need the complex interview-rating methodology developed by G. W. Brown? How valid and reliable are peoples' memories of events of the previous year?

In several chapters the person to whom the events happen is considered. Lazarus thoughtfully dissects the concept of 'denial'; Lefcourt shows the relevance of locus of control theory. The tenuous conceptual base and shaky psychometric validation of the Type A, coronary-prone personality comes as a revelation. Surely a case of the personality industry conning the hypochondriacal American public?

Social factors that may render an individual susceptible to, or protect him from, the impact of an event are discussed. Social support networks seem particularly relevant.

This book is clear, incisive and constructively critical. It provides essential reading for the potential research worker in this field.

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**Death and Dying: A Quality of Life.** Edited by **PATRICIA F. PEGG** and **ERNO METZE**. London: Pitman Books. 1981. Pp 190. £15.00.

This collection of papers covers a wider range of topics than its title suggests and some of them will be of great value to those working directly in the fields they cover and also to the liaison psychiatrist and social worker. Obstetricians and paediatricians will appreciate a group of papers on stillbirths and cot deaths: and one on perinatal death, which also contains a sensitive appraisal of the meaning of the funeral, which is largely applicable to all age groups.

A stimulating paper on coronary care shows through case material how the family, and especially the spouse, should be included in treatment and rehabilitation. Two papers on bereavement add to our knowledge of the subject. One emphasises the importance of self control as well as catharsis in grief. Other topics well covered include staff training and support, techniques for overcoming ill effects of the fear of recurrence and death in malignant disease, and some aspects of bereavement counselling.

Few will buy this book for themselves, because of its cost, but many should have access to it in a library.

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**Psychotherapeutic Treatment of Cancer Patients.** Edited by **JANE GOLDBERG**. New York: The Free Press. 1981. Pp 364. \$25.00.

Most of the 20 contributors to this book are psychologists or psychoanalysts in private practice in North America. Despite the title, much of it concerns the role of psychosomatic factors in the aetiology of cancer. Some well-known theories, such as the 'cancer prone personality' who exhibits 'pathological niceness' and cannot express anger, and the excess of depression and stressful life events as precursors of cancer, are discussed but there is little attempt to evaluate the evidence for them. There is other highly speculative material, for example a cyst on a young man's neck is described in turn as a fantasised foetus and as a castrated testicle, and its removal as symbolic

intercourse; elsewhere it is surmised that development of cancer in a psychotherapy patient may be an unconscious attempt to sabotage treatment and defeat the therapist: and there is a detailed chapter on Reich's theory of the 'carcinomatous shrinking biopathy'. Such a difficult area of medicine demands a more scientific approach than this.

The sections on treatment of cancer by individual, group or family psychotherapy are better. The chapter describing an experimental therapy group for cancer outpatients and the chapter about cancer in children are especially good, and some other chapters contain relevant descriptions of the emotional problems of cancer patients, their families and their therapists. Many contributors advocate that patients should participate actively in their treatment and 'fight' their disease using visual imagery techniques, but I found it difficult to imagine most British cancer patients or their therapists adopting such an aggressive approach towards their disease or their oncologists as recommended here.

In summary, although parts of this book would be useful for psychotherapists working with cancer patients, it is too ambitious in scope and contains many exaggerated claims which could mislead the reader.

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**Social Therapy in Psychiatry.** By DAVID H. CLARK. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1981. Pp 126. £2.95.

The name of David Clark has been synonymous with social therapy for a long time; his first book on it appeared nearly twenty years ago, and this one was originally published in 1974. It has been substantially revised now and, although sophisticated in its concepts, is written clearly and with a mainly non-medical readership in mind.

It is pointed out that while social therapy was to some extent part of a general revolt against authority, managerial *tasks* remain in any organization, and have to be done by someone. The major function of a therapeutic milieu is described as providing opportunities for the egos of damaged people to face challenges, find better ways of resolving them, and thus grow stronger. There is no coherent body of theory behind social therapy, which developed pragmatically, though several viewpoints—including systems theory—are helpful in understanding it. Such techniques as token economy and reality orientation may be valuable in arousing enthusiasm amongst those responsible for chronic patients, who

otherwise may readily be affected by 'staff burnout'. This particularly applies to nurses—the key figures in the social process of hospitalization.

The one aspect with which I would take issue here is the rather uncritical references to the work of Laing, especially since readers may not have the wider background to allow them to be critical enough themselves. Sedgwick's analysis in *Psycho Politics* shows that Laing's approach to schizophrenia has been neither as coherent nor as consistent as might appear from this text. Nevertheless, this is essential reading for every psychiatric trainee, as well as for others who need refreshing on what has tended to become part of the conventional wisdom of the subject.

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**Social Learning Practice in Residential Child Care.** By BARRY J. BROWN and MARILYN CHRISTIE. Oxford: Pergamon Press. 1981. Pp 187. £11.00, £5.50 (flexicover).

**Evaluative Research in Social Care.** Edited by E. MATILDA GOLDBERG and NAOMI CONNELLY. London: Heinemann Educational. Pp 320. £15.00, £7.50 (paperback).

Brown and Christie attempt an introduction to the theory and practice of social learning models in residential child care. Broadly this approach characterizes delinquent behaviour as a socially learned response. Therapy in this case consists in learning anew a socially sanctioned way of relating to self and others through participation in a token economy. Unfortunately, and as is so often the case with introductory texts, important issues tend to be glossed over.

Little attention is directed to specifying the range of behaviour or conditions which can be modified by such techniques; or to what the authors describe as "weaning the child away from the token economy" (i.e. rehabilitation). This is unfortunate for the suspicion remains that the approach fosters more problems than it solves, e.g. inflation in the token economy (p. 78). Aimed presumably at a practitioner audience the book is written in a simple though rather flat style with early chapters covering basic principles of the approach and subsequent chapters dealing with issues of practical utilization and staff, though not family, support mechanisms. As outlined here the approach seems primarily to be a method of social control systemizing what may anyway be fairly commonsense practice in many institutions. Again, this is unfortunate for control must surely come from within rather than outside of the individual and be