

Mental Health and Disease in Africa. By T. Asuni, F. Schoenberg & C. Swift. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books. (ISBN 978 246 287 3). 1994. Available from Safari Books (Export) Ltd, Bel Royal House, Hilgrove Street, St Helier Jersey, Channel Islands, UK. £7.50 (including postage)

Carother's *The African in Health and Disease* published in 1953 delved globally into health but exerted a seminal influence on mental health in Africa. Save such reports in general medical contexts as German's chapter on 'Psychiatric Syndromes' in *Medicine in a Tropical Environment* (1972) and Giel's *Mental Health Problems in Africa* edited by T.O. Parry; there was no formal publication on mental health in Africa until 1975 with the maiden issue of *Mental Health and Disease in Africa* by T. Asuni and C. Swift. In the period since, empirical observations revealed that, in parts of Africa, attitudes to mental health might have changed in positive although poorly understood directions. An indication was that more people seemed more aware of their psychological dysfunctioning not necessarily amounting to insanity and had sought psychiatric attention. In spite of this trend, controversy and ignorance persisted regarding the causation and forms of mental disorders particularly at the primary care level. Further, the inception of structured training in mental health and the incorporation of mental health into primary care have imposed the necessity for a publication containing essential facts of mental health with special linkage with cultural mores and what H.B.M. Murphy described as 'local preoccupations'. This is what has been accomplished in the present volume written by three distinguished psychiatrists with extensive experience in psychiatric practice in Africa.

The basic plan of the first issue is unaltered but this (second) edition is replete with clinical vignettes. The presentation is simple, succinct and relaxing, citations are kept to a minimum and the content gives a coherent and up-to-date overview of current thinking. For instance, informative texts on vagrant psychotics and parasuicide are included in 'Special Problems' and a new chapter 'Psychiatric Emergencies' is presented with simple management guides addressed to primary health workers in deprived mental health facilities.

The book also addresses the laity on questions of causation and recurrence of mental disorders still shrouded in traditional beliefs but explicable by western orthodoxy on the basis of constitutional anlage and environmental arousal. Most illuminating are the chapters on 'Personality Development and the Life Cycle' and 'Childhood Problems' which complement each other. These chapters examine the psychological and medico-social significance of weaning, nightmares,

thumbsucking, refusal of food, lying, and mental subnormality.

The weakness of the book is the chapter on 'Brain and Behaviour' which sounds technical, more so as it is unaccompanied by schematic illustrations. Surprisingly, excepting 'Amakiro', there is no mention of culture-bound syndromes found in typical forms in Africa.

The beneficiaries of this book will be general practitioners, psychologists, sociologists, undergraduates, nurses, social workers, and teachers. The postgraduate student is unlikely to be disappointed as there are references to virtually all recent major research on mental health in Africa. The twin problems of reliance on book production imports and plummeting local currencies in Africa have meant that prices of books printed outside the continent have soared. Clearly, local publication with specialist quality, in this book, is the logical option and at its current price, value for money and a worthy addition to any library.

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Liver Transplantation and the Alcoholic Patient. By Michael R. Lucey, Robert M. Merion & Thomas P. Beresford. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp 134. £27.95.

The earliest liver transplantations were undertaken in the 1960s by Thomas Starzl in Denver and Sir Roy Calne in Cambridge. They are now established, if not commonplace, procedures. One limiting factor is, of course, organ availability. This monograph is a review of the medical, surgical and psychosocial aspects of the assessment and management of individuals with alcohol induced end-stage liver failure and the difficult judgements which have to be made concerning suitability for liver transplantation. The authors, (physician, surgeon and psychiatrist), stress that while they have a responsibility to provide the best possible care for their patients, they do also have a responsibility to allocate donated livers with prudence. They provide evidence which shows that patients who come to transplant as a result of excessive drinking have just as favourable a prognosis as those who do not, provided that they are carefully selected. In recent years, a number of centres have reported similar success rates for alcoholic and non-alcoholic transplants. In one report 73 patients undergoing transplantation for end-stage alcoholic liver had a patient survival at two years of 71%. These findings seem typical of current studies.

The psychiatrist has a crucial role in this selection process. About 15% of persons suffering from alcoholism will develop alcoholic