



columns

Psychiatry: A Very Short Introduction

Tom Burns, Oxford University Press 2006, £6.99 pb, 144 pp.
ISBN: 0 19 280727 7

This book is a part of a series called 'Very Short Introductions' which is aimed at novices and covers diverse subjects in history, philosophy, religion, science and the humanities. The publishers claim that the books will deliver knowledge in a stimulating manner and in a practical 'easy to carry format'. *Psychiatry: A Very Short Introduction* is no exception. Although it appears to target a general readership, it also provides useful insights for specialist readers.

The book begins by defining the roles of various mental health professionals and also by highlighting age-old difficulties in the diagnostic processes in psychiatry. It then describes the major milestones in the development of psychiatric methods over

the past 200 years, from the era of asylums to the introduction of imaging techniques and the understanding of genetic causes of mental illnesses. As we know, contemporary psychiatry differs vastly from psychiatric practices in the 19th century. This book succeeds in drawing important theories together that underpin the growth of psychiatry over the past two centuries. It helps readers to understand the sequence of events logically and the rationale behind present-day psychiatry.

The author describes the community psychiatry movement that resulted in large numbers of patients being discharged from big institutions. He also discusses various forms of psychotherapies, with particular emphasis on the psychodynamic approach, and the clinical situations in which they are used. We should commend the author for a stimulating description of these important topics but it is disappointing that drug treatments receive very little attention.

Psychotropic medications have undoubtedly revolutionised the treatment of people with mental illness and continue to play a significant role in its bio-psychosocial management.

Finally, the author sensitively describes controversial matters such as the anti-psychiatry movement, the medicalisation of normal experiences and the abuse of patients with mental illness. Intermittent deviations of psychiatric treatment from a humane approach are likely to cause apprehension. The author's candid highlighting of the influences of society and the pharmaceutical industry on psychiatric practices enhances the credibility of the text.

This book is thought-provoking and will surely help people to understand psychiatry as a distinct specialty.

Anupam Dhamadhikari Specialist Registrar in General Adult Psychiatry, Queen Elizabeth Psychiatric Hospital, Birmingham B15 2QZ, email: dranupam@doctors.org.uk

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miscellany

Mental health television

I am looking for colleagues to help develop mental health television (<http://www.mentalhealth.tv>), an online resource for patients, relatives, students and staff. At present there are about 100 video titles which can be viewed online. This represents an ideal outlet for educational resources which to date, have been difficult to distribute to a wider audience.

The site has been running successfully for nearly 2 years and has attracted significant interest from the media, including the BBC and quality newspapers. Clearly there are lots of opportunities, including online postgraduate lectures from international speakers. Importantly, as well as providing quality undergraduate education, the resource offers a real chance to develop programmes that would inspire students to seriously

consider psychiatry as a career. Finally, there is the bigger picture to consider because a significant proportion of the audience so far has been from other countries. Please have a look and get involved.

Andrew Macaulay Consultant Psychiatrist, Wexham Park and Heatherwood Hospitals Trust, Slough, Berks SL2 5HL, email: Andrew.Macaulay@berkshire.nhs.uk

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forthcoming events

The World Psychiatric Association thematic conference *Coercive Treatment in Psychiatry*:

A Comprehensive Review will take place on 6–8 June 2007 in Dresden, Germany. Clinical, ethical, political and empirical aspects of involuntary institutional and community treatment will be fully and candidly explored at this gathering of mental health and legal professionals, policy makers, consumers, family members and researchers from around the world. More than 40 symposia, workshops and courses, and 10 plenary lectures will address important topics in the field, such as best practice of different coercive measures, use of these measures in special (mental) healthcare settings, and users', relatives' and providers' views on coercive treatment. For further information about the conference please visit the website at <http://www.wpa2007dresden.org>. Alternatively, please contact the organising company, Intercom Dresden GmbH (tel: +49 (0)351 4633 3933; fax: +49 (0)351 4633 7049; email: rkuehne@intercom.de).

The Southampton and New Forest Perinatal Mental Health Service (Hospital Doctor Team of the Year 2004) would like to announce **Perinatal Mental Health 2007: Treatments and Services** (special focus on NICE guidelines), a 2-day update on clinical research, service and policy developments, and good clinical practice in the field of antenatal and postnatal maternal mental health. The event will be held on 28–29 June 2007 in Winchester and content will include NICE guidelines, psychological treatments, current services in the UK and an interactive session with an expert panel on NICE guideline implementation. Early booking is recommended. For further information or to join the Southampton and New Forest Perinatal Mental Health Service electronic mailing list please contact Sue Wallis, Perinatal Mental Health Services, The Lodge, Tatchbury Mount, Calmore, Southampton SO40 2RZ (tel: 023 8087 4348; fax: 023 8087 4360; email: sue.wallis@hantspt-sw.nhs.uk).

The **3rd International Congress on Women's Mental Health** will be held on 16–20 March 2008 in Melbourne, Australia under the auspices of the International Association of Women's Mental Health, the Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre and other associates. Through a series of keynote lectures, workshops and sessions, specific illnesses such as depression, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, post-partum illness, eating disorders, issues relating to the menopause and ageing, sociological issues such as domestic violence, and affirmation of women's roles in their societies will be explored. Special workshops will focus on the impact of major traumas such as war, famine and poverty on women's mental health. The programme will be complemented by an extensive trade exhibition featuring the latest developments and innovations in the field. For further information please visit the website at <http://www.iawmhcongress2008.com.au>

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