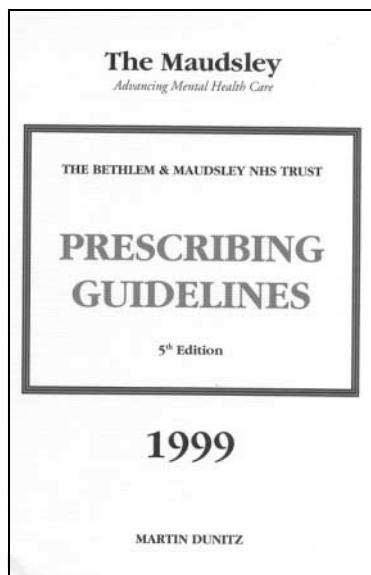




The Bethlem & Maudsley NHS Trust Prescribing Guidelines 5th Edition

Edited by David Taylor et al.
London: Martin Dunitz Ltd. 1999.
190 pp. £14.95 (pb)
ISBN: 1-85317-835-7



This new edition of *The Bethlem & Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines* is the case of an acorn growing into a medium-sized oak, and an admirable oak too. The fifth edition is now a 'formally published' book. In other words, it is no longer published with the assistance of grants from pharmaceutical companies. This development reassures the reader that the guidelines are independent of any direct or indirect influence from the pharmaceutical industry. Not that there was ever any reason to doubt the independence of the previous editions.

As the editors say, the *Guidelines* have become an institution in the UK. It is a worthy compendium of information. From clearly laid out algorithms for the drug treatment of schizophrenia or depression to advice on the swapping or stopping of antidepressants, to advice on the use of psychotropic agents in special populations such as children and pregnant or lactating mothers to advice on rapid tranquillisation, the *Guidelines* manage to integrate new knowledge with an understanding of the dilemmas and preoccupations of practitioners. The common sense and pragmatic approach of the *Guidelines* will continue to endear it to clinicians. This characteristic of the *Guidelines* is particularly welcome at a time when some are looking to guidelines to reduce the wide

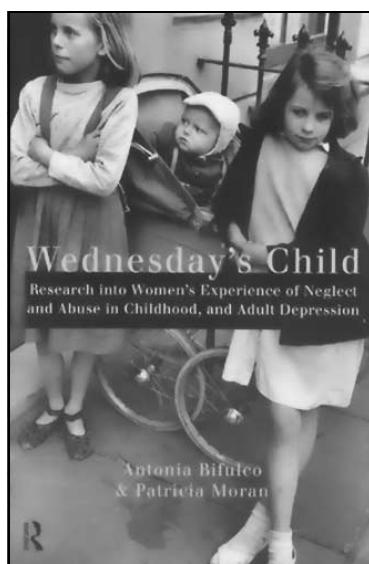
variation in the practice of medicine and in the outcomes of treatment in the UK. The anxiety is that guidelines may narrow or severely limit clinical freedom and that patients will ultimately lose out. Furthermore, there is anxiety that guidelines prepared by special interest groups will not speak to the interests of the vast body of clinicians, but will only serve to promote particular clinical approaches. *The Bethlem & Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines* belie these anxieties.

The *Guidelines* started life as a reference source for clinicians at the Bethlem & Maudsley Hospitals. Deservedly, they have become established as a resource for clinicians in the UK and it is likely that they will go on to have an international status. The contribution of the graphics and text design to the success of the 5th edition must be emphasised. All readers look forward to an electronic version, available on CD-ROM as well as on-line in the near future.

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Wednesday's Child: Research into Women's Experience of Neglect and Abuse in Childhood, and Adult Depression.

By Antonia Bifulco & Patricia Moran. London and New York: Routledge. 1998. 207 pp. £14.99 (pb). ISBN: 0-415-16527-X



The masterly way in which the authors of *Wednesday's Child* have woven together

the quantitative and qualitative data of their series of research projects, carried out over a period of 20 years under the directorship of George Brown and Tirril Harris, must be the envy of researchers investigating the psychological and social influences of childhood experiences on adult life. Although the book often makes disturbing reading, the women's poignant accounts give meaning to the bare statistical fact that as many as one in four ordinary women in the community have been subject to severe neglect or abuse in childhood. This doubles the likelihood of their suffering from clinical depression in adult life, independently of other adverse family circumstances such as parental loss, parental conflict, poverty or parental psychiatric state. Furthermore, the greater the number of abuses, be it neglect, physical or sexual, in childhood, the higher the risk of depression in adulthood.

By asking the women to give detailed descriptions of their childhood experiences, corroborated in a novel way by independent interviews with their sisters, it has proved possible to identify the factors that link neglect and abuse with later depression. The authors found that women's experience of neglectful parenting, including role-reversal and antipathy, and physical, sexual and psychological abuse extinguishes their sense of self-worth and damages their view of human relationships. Social support, along with coping strategies, are two of the main factors identified as protecting women from the effects of adverse childhood experiences – and yet the very nature of the legacy of these experiences makes it difficult for them to establish supportive relationships, leaving them vulnerable to feelings of isolation and depression.

As we come to the end of the century of the child and the dawn of a new millennium, the authors stress the importance of providing a safe, nurturing environment in which parents and children feel that they are valued and can develop a sense of trust and in which as adults they can adopt a meaningful role for themselves. This is a duty for society as well as for families individually and as such has implications for social policy. We owe it to the women whose innermost secrets have been chronicled in *Wednesday's Child* and to the women, men and children whose stories have gone untold.

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