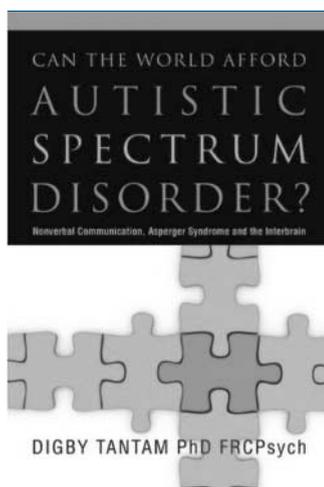


Testable hypotheses are offered but most remain untested. More significantly, far too little is known about the relationship between genes and the aetiology of these disorders, and the understanding of the struggle for expression between parental genes is at a very early stage.

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Can the World Afford Autistic Spectrum Disorder? Nonverbal Communication, Asperger Syndrome and the Interbrain

By Digby Tantam.
Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2009.
£16.99 (hb). 256pp.
ISBN: 9781843106944

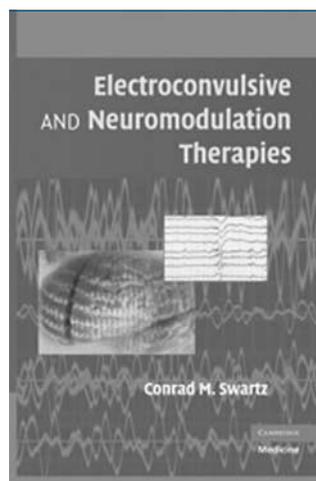
Digby Tantam proposes that people are constantly updating and refining their understanding of the social world through the exchange of subtle non-verbal information. This unconscious flow of information between individuals creates a network which he considers to be analogous to the internet, hence his coinage of the term 'interbrain'. Using this model, he suggests that impairments in non-verbal communication cause individuals with autism-spectrum disorder to have an inefficient connection to the interbrain and this, in turn, is what underlies the social and behavioural difficulties which characterise these conditions.

The book unfolds in a logical and sensible manner, beginning with a thorough introduction to non-verbal communication. In subsequent chapters, Tantam carefully builds his argument by drawing on evidence from research and clinical practice, also discussing the possible biological underpinnings of his ideas. Finally, he covers the extended consequences of non-verbal communication impairment and considers how the interbrain framework can be used to assist in understanding people with autism-spectrum disorder.

The author's influences as a clinical psychotherapist and as a scientist are evident throughout the book and he is particularly impressive at fusing the biological and psychological aspects of autism-spectrum disorder. He makes extensive use of analogy and real-life vignettes to illustrate his ideas, making complex concepts easy to grasp and the book interesting and enjoyable to read. The book's central thesis will strike a chord with anyone who works with people with autism-spectrum disorder, particularly with regard to understanding social impairments, although some will be less convinced that an inefficient interbrain connection is a fundamental cause of the other features of autism-spectrum disorder.

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Electroconvulsive and Neuromodulation Therapies

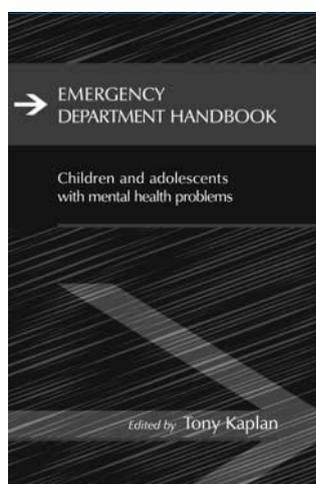
Edited by Conrad M. Swartz.
Cambridge University Press.
2009. £50.00 (hb). 648pp.
ISBN: 9780521883887

This monumental work is a handbook covering every conceivable aspect of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). More than 50 international authors with experience in the field have contributed. It is also a very personal work, coloured by the opinions and experiences of Swartz (who also contributes six chapters and the preface). These take the form of journalistic 'editor's notes' after other authors' chapters, often somewhat elliptic or even eccentric comments, usually critical of the chapter authors' contribution.

I would not recommend the book to trainees or even for a training library. The highly personal approach to evidence requires the critical sifting of the material by a mature reader, who may then even take a certain amount of enjoyment from the quirky presentation. The book is written from the US perspective and may not be relevant in some aspects to UK National Health Service practice. There are some rather arcane chapters, such as 'ECT in biographical books and movies', 'ECT availability in the US', 'ECT forms', but this makes it likely that everybody interested in ECT will find something useful in the book. In contrast, the four chapters on neuromodulation treatments appear as an afterthought and are not sufficiently detailed to provide more than a cursory look at these methods.

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Emergency Department Handbook: Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Problems

Edited by Tony Kaplan
RCPsych Publications. 2009.
£15.00 (pb). 206pp.
ISBN: 9781904671732

To many doctors, nurses and allied health practitioners, the world of child and adolescent mental distress and disorder is alien

territory, mentally marked with a sizeable 'off-piste' sign (definitely somebody else's business). Paradoxically, a significant proportion of children and young people, perhaps as much as 10%, are thought to have at some point in their development a significant mental health difficulty that they, their parents or teachers will be unable to deal with adequately without professional help. For some time now there has been an increasingly high-profile campaign for all agencies to accept that child and adolescent mental well-being is everybody's business.

The aim of this handbook is for 'practitioners at the front line in emergency departments to be better trained, more informed and better prepared' to address the challenges that children, adolescents and their families present as mental health concerns. I suspect the book will be most welcome to colleagues from accident and emergency departments, as dealing with young people must represent additional stress within already highly demanding work.

The book also provides an overview of child and adolescent mental health that will be of interest to many child and adolescent

psychiatrists. Despite my 10 years as a consultant in this field, I found that I was learning some useful new information or that things I half knew were being helpfully clarified – for example, the differential grid for (self-induced) cutting and a very thorough overview of how to assess the mental state of a potentially suicidal youngster (which, in certain cases, can be a stressful business even for the most experienced psychiatrist). There is a very helpful chapter on consent and capacity which is an increasingly tricky area in this age group, although I would have preferred a bit more specific detail on the Scottish legal perspective.

Overall, this handbook should definitely be read by all senior trainees in child and adolescent psychiatry and will be very useful to many others involved in this increasingly significant area of healthcare.

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