

Synopsis of Neuropsychiatry

Editors: Fogel BS, Schiffer RB, Rao SM.

Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, 2000.

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With the rapid advancement in neuroscience, there is a pressing need for psychiatrists and other medical professionals to keep up to date with the revolutionary theories about brain mechanism and its interactions with human behaviour. As the boundary between neurology and psychiatry becomes increasingly blurred, the emergence of neuropsychiatry as a specialty aims to re-orientate knowledge of aberrant human behaviour attributable to pathological brain mechanisms.

Synopsis of Neuropsychiatry, a summary of the parent volume, *Neuropsychiatry*, aims to provide an easy-to-read reference for a broad readership of multidisciplinary professionals whose work involves the management of patients with neuropsychiatric disorders.

The book is divided into 3 sections. The first section provides the background of assessment methods and principles of treatment in neuropsychiatry. The first chapter by Mueller and Fogel gives a template of bedside neuropsychiatric examinations, consisting of a composite of important neurological, psychiatric, and neuropsychological examinations. The chapter on treatment discusses the use of drugs and other rehabilitation therapy in a wide range of neuropsychiatric disorders. While the topic is essentially the backbone of the introduction, the content is generally of great practical value for practicing clinicians who want reference guides for treatment problems.

The second section, organised according to functional brain systems, is devoted to recent advances in basic neuroscience. The sheer volume of the rapidly advancing knowledge in basic brain mechanisms makes it hard for clinicians to keep abreast of the potential clinical applications. This

section provides a concise overview of basic neuroscience. The division of the central nervous system into functional systems helps to guide the reader with clinical orientation. The language is relatively clear and the content is concise enough for easy assimilation.

The third section deals with common neuropsychiatric syndromes. Both classical neuropsychiatric disorders and topics of recent interest are covered. The chapter on white matter disorders by Filley provides a concise, up to date review of this area. The chapter on epilepsy by Trimble, Ring, and Schmitz gives a systematic overview on the neuropsychiatric aspects of epilepsy. Although well recognised for a long time, the information is still of interest to both psychiatrists and neurologists.

As the editors state in the preface, the aim of this synopsis is to provide material with brevity, clarity, and complexity but remain sufficiently clear for clinicians of different disciplines. The broad coverage, however, is occasionally offset by a lack of specificity. Given the breath of knowledge in neuropsychiatry, this book should be of use to psychiatrists interested in a biological approach to treatment.

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Models for Mental Disorder — Conceptual Models in Psychiatry, Third Edition

Authors: Tyrer P, Sterberg D

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, Chichester, 1998.

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“Those who imprison themselves within the confines of one model only have the perspective of the keyhole”. This is probably the reason why Tyrer and Steinberg wrote this small book, and updated it with a third edition in 1998. Psychiatry is not yet an exact science. It accommodates a

range of disciplines and it is often not easy to find out if a statement represents fact, theory, or opinion. In order to explain psychiatry, it is necessary to use models that offer the practitioner a consistent approach that justifies treatment or investigation.

Following a thought-provoking introduction, individual chapters are devoted to disease model (often wrongly termed 'medical' model), psychodynamic model, behavioural model, cognitive model, and social model in psychiatry. The authors use plain language to help readers understand many basic issues that could otherwise be quite profound and complicated.

In the corresponding chapters, typical clinical situations are interpreted using the models, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each model in practice. Readers readily appreciate that the same clinical problem can be conceptualised by different models, and dimensions in understanding and intervention are correspondingly widened.

The disease model is particularly appropriate for psychoses in which identifiable disease already exists. The psychodynamic model helps to understand aspects of both normal behaviour and symptomatology that otherwise appear meaningless.

The social model shows that mentally ill people, particularly those with neuroses and personality disorders, cannot be considered in isolation from their families, and social and cultural background. The behavioural model is at its best in explaining and treating some aspects of neurotic illness that lead to abnormal patterns of behaviour, and the cognitive model shows the importance of irrational thoughts in much of mental illness.

Although such models are probably familiar to most practising mental health professionals, the book uncovers many underlying assumptions and the implications for each model. Clinicians often use a particular model without

awareness of hidden assumptions that they have made about their patients. By exploring such fundamental conceptual issues, one can reflect on many aspects of our daily habitual practice that we have taken for granted.

The book elegantly depicts the conflicts and difficulties that professionals from different conceptual perspectives encounter when they come together to discuss the formulation and management of a particular patient. Instead of fitting patients rigidly and uncomfortably into diagnostic pigeon holes as 'atypical', the book reminds us of the possibility of adopting alternative conceptual perspectives that may alleviate this clinical uneasiness and perhaps bring in useful interventional ideas.

I particularly like the final chapter in which the authors attempt to bring about a 'correlative model'. Levels of functioning and hierarchy of models are involved so that a multi-dimensional and harmonious model could be worked out. Teamwork, consultation, and models of care are discussed in the context of this integrative model. Of course, the key is still when and where to use a particular model to get the best from it.

Although the book is said to be targeted at students of social work, psychology, and medicine, I think advanced practitioners will still find it useful and refreshing.

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