

Psychiatric Survival Guide

The Washington Manual Survival Guide Series

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For trainee doctors in their first few years of clinical practice, pocket-sized books are often good companions when facing unfamiliar situations. These pocket-sized books may also be helpful for experienced doctors to refresh their knowledge, when needed. This small volume is an additional choice for a pocket-sized reference book for psychiatric practice.

This book is divided into 4 parts. The first part aims at introducing the basic skills, techniques, and principles for a psychiatric consultation. The second and third parts concentrate on the management of common psychiatric disorders and difficult clinical situations (e.g., suicidal or violent patients). The fourth part is a combination of a reference for commonly used psychiatric medications and their side effects, short notes on electroconvulsive therapy, a series of commonly used psychiatric assessment tools, and an abbreviated Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV diagnostic criteria for the diagnoses discussed in the second part of the book.

This book differs from other pocket-sized references in several ways. In the second and third parts, it guides the reader facing a clinical scenario step-by-step through the possible differential diagnoses, important points in history taking, mental state and physical examination, investigations, and management. There is a Style Pointer section in each

chapter, which provides instruction on how to phrase questions when interviewing patients. This may be particularly helpful for non-English speaking trainees when attending overseas professional examinations. The Emergency Round Discussion outlines the algorithms for emergency settings, which may provide some tips on how to instigate a management plan — this may be a difficult task for a trainee. The Class Notes section shows how to give a concise and accurate presentation of different clinical scenarios.

Being lightweight and thin is another advantage, but also a limitation of this book. The content provides detailed acute medical management for different clinical scenarios but not much about psychological and other aspects in the long-term management of these disorders. Eating disorders, despite being a major diagnostic category nowadays, are not even mentioned in the book. A more detailed description of the commonly seen psychiatric drug interactions would also be a useful reminder when prescribing to patients already taking multiple medications.

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