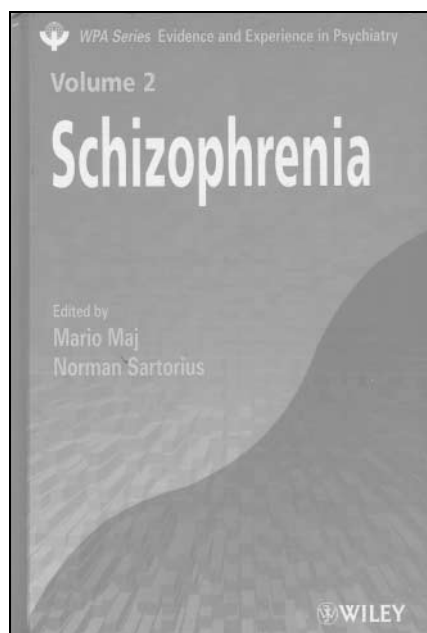


## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN and ALAN LEE

### Schizophrenia

Edited by Mario Maj & Norman Sartorius.  
Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 1999. 492 pp.  
£60.00 (hb). ISBN 0 471 99906 7



This book, the second volume in the World Psychiatric Association's series 'Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry', was a pleasure to review. One can dip in and out of it at random to find an important aspect of schizophrenia summarised in a few paragraphs. It is a collection of six review articles, followed by expert commentaries, thus combining research evidence with clinical experience. The reviews cover diagnosis, pharmacological and psychotherapeutic treatments, prevention of disability and stigma, schizophrenia spectrum disorders and the cost of treating schizophrenia. Each concludes by summarising consistent evidence, incomplete evidence and areas open to research. The commentaries vary in quality, scope and length. Some emphasise particular aspects of the review, others elaborate on areas not covered, while a few explore or espouse the individual interests of the commentator.

The reviews are all well written, balanced and up-to-date. Given their ambitious scope, it is not surprising that individual areas get sketchy attention. The

first article and commentaries express the well-rehearsed limitations of the diagnostic term without stating what should replace it. While atypical antipsychotics are only briefly covered in the review of pharmacological treatments, several commentators mention their superiority, highlighting the current lack of consensus. In an otherwise excellent review of psychotherapeutic treatments focusing on four well-researched modalities, the authors omit the area of interaction between psychological treatments and medication. Several commentaries note the exclusion of dynamic treatments from the review. The chapter on stigma and disability is the longest, most discursive and least focused. Schizophrenia spectrum disorders, not an area of great academic interest, is reviewed commendably. Cloninger's criticism of spectrum concepts makes superb reading, as he compares the shifting diagnostic boundaries between ICD and DSM to "moving around the chairs on the top deck of an ocean liner which is sinking because of a gaping hole in the bow". The final article is an excellent introduction to health economics and methods of economic evaluation. It also summarises the current evidence for the greater cost-effectiveness of the atypicals.

The book is for whetting appetites rather than providing a substantial meal. Most people will find something of their particular interest, but no one is likely to find an exhaustive appraisal of an area. It is designed for an international readership, and some commentaries, such as those on continental concepts of schizophrenia, or experience of stigma in the less industrialised world, are rarely found together in one volume. However, the price is disproportionately steep, given that the book is likely to have a short shelf-life. Post-graduate libraries with money to spare may consider it a worthy addition. For those seeking an in-depth exploration of aspects of schizophrenia, the breadth of this volume will be scant compensation.

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### Dementia

Edited by Mario Maj & Norman Sartorius.  
Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2000. 392 pp.  
£60.00 (hb). ISBN 0 471 60698 7

Textbooks are undergoing an evolution. First, there was the single-author textbook, which was usually held to be definitive or, at least, authoritative. This was replaced more recently by edited textbooks, for which experts wrote chapters on their areas of specific interest. This book – the third in the World Psychiatric Association's series 'Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry' – is an example of the next stage in this evolution. The format involves a series of reviews on topics within dementia, each review followed by commentaries. The reviews focus on: definition and epidemiology; clinical diagnosis; neuropsychological and instrumental diagnosis; pharmacological treatments; psychosocial interventions; and the costs of dementia.

Although the book purports to be evidence-based, it does not quite get there. For example, the reviews, although on the whole well written and fairly comprehensive, are not systematic. There is no attempt to identify all available published and unpublished evidence or to quality-filter the evidence identified, and no attempt to synthesise the results into a meta-analysis. As they stand the reviews therefore merely reflect the opinions of the authors.

The commentaries are similar in format to peer-review commentaries, and therein lies one of the strengths of this book. For example, the chapter on definition and epidemiology has 14 commentaries, each with a slightly different focus, and the commentary authors read like a *Who's Who of Old Age Psychiatry*. Each commentary is about two pages long and is followed by its own reference list.

The principal advantage of this way of arranging a textbook is that a vast number of experts are able to contribute. Unfortunately, however, many of the commentaries start with rather congenial commendations of the authors of the reviews, which is a bit wearisome after a while. Indeed, it seems that some authors of the commentaries are rather reticent about disagreeing with the reviews.

Is this book useful? Yes, it is. Although it falls between the two stools of the conventional textbook and systematic reviews, it is a great compendium of up-to-date facts and opinions. However, there is too little application of evidence-based

principles to call it an evidence-based textbook. It does take rather a long time to learn how to get around the book effectively, but it is helped by a good index, which includes the commentaries as well as the review articles.

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### **Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence (2nd edn)**

Edited by Bryan Lask & Rachel Bryant-Waugh. Hove: Psychology Press. 1999. 382 pp. £30.00 (hb). ISBN 0 86377 803 8

When eating disorders present in adulthood, the therapeutic task of uncovering and understanding the original aetiological variables is hampered by the development of secondary handicaps and the subject's position within the sick role. Often individual family experiential factors stem from adolescence, but time may have clouded their original meaning. Attention to early-onset cases therefore affords greater opportunity to understand the contribution of the various aetiological factors that lead to fears about weight and loss of control and the motives behind characteristic

behaviours. In addition, such study offers opportunity for primary and secondary prevention.

The first edition of this book was based largely on the editors' own clinical and research experience at Great Ormond Street Hospital, London, and it became a leading resource in this area. The second edition, after a gap of about 6 years, has been fully revised. Many chapters have been completely rewritten and the result is a more comprehensive, evidence-based book, drawing on and distilling much of the published literature in this area from the past 10 years.

Like the previous edition, the book has a multi-disciplinary authorship reflecting the importance of the contributions of, for example, nursing, medicine, psychology and dietetics to the management of disorders that bridge physical and psychological medicine. In an area in which the dynamic between clinicians, patients and families is so crucial to success and in which users are not always positive about their treatment experience, attention to these relationships is particularly welcome and the contributions from a patient and parent about their experiences are very pertinent. The law regarding consent to treatment and the ethical issues around confidentiality and parental responsibility provide immense challenges, and the chapter on this subject is particularly welcome.

The revised edition is an excellent book, which is free from jargon and which will be



an invaluable resource for all disciplines working with children and young people with eating disorders.

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