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The Stress of Combat: The Combat of Stress. Caring Strategies Towards Ex-Service Men and Women

By Roy Brook. Brighton: The Alpha Press. 1999. 318 pp. £12.95 (pb). ISBN: 1-898595-27-5.

The popularity of the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has increased our awareness of the mental health difficulties experienced by some ex-service personnel. Roy Brook, a retired British Army Major, chronicles his experiences as a welfare officer of the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society, also known as Combat Stress. Over the past 80 years this charitable organisation has attempted to help ex-service personnel with mental health difficulties through welfare officer visits, assistance with war

pensions and other benefit claims and also brief residential stays at the society's three residential nursing homes in Scotland, Kent and Shropshire.

The book provides a good history of the acceptance or lack of acceptance of psychiatric reactions and disorders in service personnel and then considers psychiatric injury as a result of the major conflicts of the 20th century, from the First World War to Bosnia. Other mental health difficulties such as schizophrenia and organic brain syndromes are mentioned in addition to PTSD. Some of the numerous case histories are very interesting but the quantity does not make for easy reading. As one might expect, the book is very pro the Combat Stress organisation and its effectiveness.

The book is likely to be most useful to ex-service personnel and their families, particularly those who have experienced

mental health difficulties as a result of their service experience. Mental health professionals may gain some improved knowledge of the management options available for ex-service personnel, the range of specific benefits they may be entitled to and most importantly the existence of Combat Stress, which has undoubtedly been appreciated by many individuals. In my opinion any ex-serviceman or -woman with significant mental health difficulties should be given the organisation's contact details (tel: 01372 841600).

Jonathan I. Bisson, Consultant in Liaison Psychiatry, Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust, University Hospital of Wales, Heath Park, Cardiff CF4 4XW

Conflict of interest

J.B. is an honorary consultant with Combat Stress.

forthcoming events

The **58th residential revision course for the MRCPsych examinations** will be held at the University of Surrey, Guildford, on 8–15 August 2001 (Part I) and 15–23 August 2001 (Part II). Further details can be obtained from Mrs S Caines, Belmont Postgraduate Centre, Chiltern Wing, Sutton Hospital, Sutton, Surrey SM2 5NF (tel: 020 8296 4177).

The Centre for Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) is organising a national conference on **Innovations in Mental Health – 2001** at the University of York on 3–5 September 2001. Eleven parallel symposia on all aspects of mental health, learning disabilities, children and the elderly are included. For further information please write to CCPD, PO Box B135, Huddersfield HD1 1YG (tel: 01484 532 102; fax: 01484 425 699; e-mail: worldforum@aol.com).

Pavilion are the organisers of a 1-day national conference entitled **The Treatment of People with Borderline Personality Disorder – Key Approaches and their Evidence Base**. This conference is for anyone involved in providing or developing services for people with borderline personality disorder and will take place in London on 24 September 2001. For further information please contact Pavilion (tel: 01273 623 222; fax: 01273 625 526; e-mail: info@pavpub.com) or book online at <http://www.pavpub.com>.

Mole Conferences would like to announce **Mental Health Services Research: Putting Evidence into Practice**, 1-day conferences that will take place in London on 11 October 2001 and 12 October 2001.

The conference being held on the first day will summarise the latest research and among other aspects will include the following: treatments of common mental disorders in primary care; treatment for dual diagnosis; innovations in the care of people with learning disabilities; ethnicity and suicide; and evaluating services for older adults. The second day will consist of specialist conferences on social care and the economics of mental health. Mole are also the organisers of **The Whole in the Heart of Contemporary Society: Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy in Practice**, the First Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy Section (UKCP) Conference. This conference will take place on 23 November 2001 at Regent's College in London and will engage with the different facets of humanistic and integrative psychotherapy and focus on: psychotherapy as a social and political force; the challenge of relating; and approaches to unconscious processes. For further information please contact: Mole Conferences, 26 Church Road, Portslade, Brighton BN41 1LA (tel: 01273 242 634; fax: 01273 235 095; e-mail: enquiries@mole-conferences.com; website: <http://www.mole-conferences.com>).

The Division of Psychological Medicine at the Institute of Psychiatry would like to announce **The Second Annual Institute of Psychiatric 'Matter-to-Mind' Symposium**. This year's symposium, titled Bipolar Affective Disorder – 'From Matter to Mind' will focus on bipolar affective disorder and build on the success of last year's meeting, Schizophrenia – From Matter-to-Mind. The 'matter-to-mind' title reflects the integration of work from all disciplines in academic neuroscience

focusing on areas at the cutting edge of research. Leading international psychiatrists will be presenting their current research in bipolar affective disorder. This 2-day symposium will take place on 27–28 November 2001 at the Institute of Psychiatry in London. For further information please see <http://www.iop.kcl.ac.uk/matter2mind> or contact Dr Mike Travis (tel: 020 7848 0625; e-mail: m.travis@iop.kcl.ac.uk) or Dr Mary Phillips (e-mail: m.phillips@iop.kcl.ac.uk).

Call for Papers. The *Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR)* will be held in Ravenscar, North Yorkshire on 24–27 March 2002. The deadline for sending in papers or posters is Friday 12 October 2001. Abstract forms and/or requests for information should be addressed to Debbie Kirby-Mayers, 1 Ansley Grove, Heaton Moor, Stockport SK4 3LF (fax: 0161 432 4507).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, who has developed a stress reduction programme widely used in the USA for people with a range of conditions, including mental illness, and Saki Santorelli will be running a 5-day professional training retreat 17–22 August 2001, on **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)** in mind–body medicine. This training event is an opportunity for health care and other care professionals to train intensively in mindfulness meditation as it is taught in the Stress Reduction Clinic in the form of MBSR. The event will be taking place at the University of Wales, Bangor, and for further information about booking a place please contact Jenny Marshall (tel: 01248 388 088).