

pathways. The chapter by Sangeeta Patel on the 'Role of general practitioners in the management of mental illness in ethnic minorities' is also interesting and good in understanding current problems in primary care. A number of chapters reiterate current good practice in service planning and provision, information which can be found in publications from mental health charities and recent Department of Health guidelines, particularly the importance of listening and involving users and ethnic minority communities in the planning and running of services. Given the ambitious sounding title of the book, case reviews of what works and what does not work would have had more impact. A particularly interesting chapter, however, on the way forward in making services more appropriate to ethnic minorities, was that of S. P. Sashidharan on a non-institutionally-based service in an inner-city multi-racial and multi-cultural area of Birmingham. This describes the background and process in developing a new service which draws interesting parallels with similar developments in Italy. While home treatment services are not new, setting them up with a view to addressing the concerns of ethnic minorities in an urban area is new. One hopes that such schemes will be successful in the short and long term.

Some of the review chapters, particularly that by Kwame McKenzie and Robin Murray, are well argued, but one is left wishing that there was more on environmental risk factors – perhaps the authors should consider racism as an environmental stressor and explore it in some depth. Given the potential significance of the findings of the Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities there should have been an opportunity for a broader and more critical review in the chapter by Sunjai Gupta.

I feel this is a good introduction for those who are unfamiliar with the subject. Trainees and practising psychiatrists should make a point of reading it as one frequently gets the impression that their knowledge of

the subject is over-influenced by the more hysterical UK literature, particularly that suggesting an epidemic of schizophrenia in people of African descent.

David Ndegwa Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, Mental Health Unit, 108 Landor Road, Stockwell, London SW9 9NT

Psychiatric Morbidity Among Prisoners in England and Wales

By N. Singleton, H. Meltzer & R. Gatward.
London: Office for National Statistics.
372 pp. £45.00 (pb).
ISBN 0-116210-45-1

My favourite scene in the film *Wayne's World* has the aspiring rock stars brought face to face with the real thing, in the shape of Alice Cooper, clad in leather and mascara. Overawed, their wits desert them and they can only babble: "We're not worthy, we're not worthy, we're not worthy!", as they prostrate themselves at his feet. I had to be restrained from a similar action at my first meeting with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) team, after reading their *magnum opus*. I had co-authored previous national studies of sentenced and remanded prisoners, but these were amateur efforts, a forensic psychiatrist playing at surveys. Here is the real thing – nearly 400 pages of epidemiology as it should be done.

The authors came fresh from large-scale studies of mental disorders in private households, in institutions catering for people with mental health problems and among the homeless. This book describes the extension of similar methods to the prison population, to complete the picture of psychiatric morbidity throughout England and Wales. Taken together, these projects rival the Epidemiologic Catchment Area surveys in the USA. Indeed, they surpass the American work by including prisoners, and both the authors

and the Department of Health deserve praise for recognising that prisoners are part of our population (anyone who doubts this claim should bear in mind that most of the subjects of this research would have been released before the book was published).

The book is based on over 3000 interviews, and its comprehensive nature means that it will become an essential reference for anyone interested in prisons or the epidemiology of mental disorders. The diagnoses covered include psychosis, neurosis, substance misuse, intellectual functioning and personality disorder. Extensive analyses link each of these with socio-demographic variables, offending and service use.

The style is matter of fact, with the emphasis on clear presentation of a wealth of data. I would have liked to see more comment and analysis – at some points, any comment at all would have been welcome. For example, it is revealed that 21% of female remand prisoners have a probable psychotic disorder. This is a stunning figure, as it is four times the rate found in a previous English survey, and considerably higher than American figures. If correct, it would mean that we lead the world in imprisoning female psychiatric patients. Yet, this bombshell is delivered in the downbeat manner characteristic of ONS reports, with no more fanfare than would accompany the figures for how many citizens have access to a colour television or indoor plumbing.

This is a minor criticism of an excellent work. The authors can claim to have done exactly what they set out to do, and to have done it well. They have created a reference that will be indispensable to those working in this area, and it is reasonable to leave most of the discussion and argument to others.

Tony Maden Institute of Psychiatry, De Crespigny Park, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF