

## Book Review

# Problem-based psychiatry

by Meagher D, O'Connell H, McFarland J, Moloney N and Leonard M. 2001 Elsevier. ISBN: 978-0-70208103-3

In recent times, medical education has been moving away from traditional didactic approaches to teaching and towards case-based and problem-based models of learning. Problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centred approach that is based around problem solving by students in small groups with a facilitator present. The students are given a case with specific learning outcomes and are expected to read up on and research this information themselves and bring it back to the group for discussion. It is believed to have several benefits, including promoting self-directed learning, problem solving skills, professionalism, and teamwork. All skills that are essential in medical practice.

In their book, *Problem-based psychiatry*, the authors use their knowledge from setting up and implementing a problem-based medicine curriculum at the University of Limerick, Ireland, to inform a beautifully laid out, informative, and above all highly clinically relevant textbook. The book comprises 26 case-based chapters, with each one focusing on a core area in psychiatry. There are also two additional chapters on psychiatric assessment and clinical pharmacology. Each chapter follows the narrative of a patient presentation through 6–7 'stations', prompting the reader to think critically and to begin formulating a diagnosis as they are given more information about the case.

The reader is introduced to a variety of psychiatric case presentations throughout the book, from Shane, a young man with symptoms of acute mania, Emma who suffers with an eating disorder, to Trevor, who suffers with a personality disorder. Each case has been carefully thought out to mirror real life clinical practice and to cover a core topic in psychiatry. The reader is given a list of learning objectives at the start of each chapter and is given the information needed to answer these objectives as the chapter progresses.

The authors describe this approach as 'signposted' problem-based learning. This means that the reader is provided with the core information around each of the clinical questions and learning objectives which arise from them. This differs from traditional problem-based learning, where the student is required to research the information themselves and has been refined through the authors work at the University of Limerick and extensive student feedback. Providing the clinical knowledge and information needed in a concise way and in the context of a clinical case means that students can immediately see the relevance of the information clinically and makes the book more readable than a conventional textbook.

The book is well laid out, and the colour scheme and use of text boxes makes it easy to see at a glance which parts of the chapter are the clinical case, key questions to cover in the psychiatric assessment, and key factual knowledge related to the diagnosis. There are also sections for further readings, including key papers and articles in the area and the chapters are relatively short, which makes them easy to re-read and reference. Access to the e-book is also included, giving easy access to the material on your smartphone or computer.

Overall, this book serves as an excellent resource for medical students and psychiatric trainees alike. Its case-based approach makes it very readable and applicable to real life clinical scenarios encountered in psychiatry. It encourages critical thinking through its presentation of each case over several stages or stations within the chapter, which enables the reader to explore critical questions and formulate the case as the chapter progresses. The authors' outline in the preface and introduction how the book has been informed by day-to-day teaching and feedback from students and this is very much evident in both the layout and content of the book. The quality of this book is a fitting tribute to Dr Maeve Leonard (1968–2015), who played a key role in teaching psychiatry at the University of Limerick Graduate Entry Medical School and in writing this book.

**Conflict of interest.** Author has no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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