

Reviews

Handbook on Obsessive–Compulsive and Related Disorders

Edited by K. A. Phillips and D. J. Stein
American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2015,
£41.40, pb, 300 pp.
ISBN: 9781585624898

This multi-author book examines the disorders categorised in DSM-5 as obsessive–compulsive and related disorders (OCaRDs) and also covers two other related disorders: illness anxiety and obsessive–compulsive personality disorders. The text is written by experts in the field, many of whom were instrumental in developing the concept of OCaRDs in DSM-5. Unlike many multi-author publications, this is brief and to the point. Each of the chapters is arranged in a structured format which includes a general introduction; diagnostic criteria and symptomatology; epidemiology; comorbidity; course and prognosis; psychosocial impairment; developmental considerations; gender-related issues; cultural aspects of phenomenology; assessment and differential diagnosis; aetiology and pathophysiology; treatment (somatic as well as cognitive and behavioural) and a summary of key points at the end. Most chapters also contain illustrative case vignettes which demonstrate the disorders and their potential severity.

This excellent title should be on the bookshelf of every psychiatrist, whether working with adults or children. Mental health workers, managers and commissioners often overlook common conditions such as obsessive–compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder, regarding them as less severe and important than conditions such as schizophrenia. This work describes the hugely detrimental effects these conditions can have on the individual's mortality, morbidity and social functioning. It also considers newly defined disorders, such as hoarding and skin-picking disorders. These conditions are poorly understood and have generally not been researched extensively. They do, however, appear to be widespread and often have extreme consequences on the individual's mental and physical well-being. For example, hoarding disorder, which was previously often classified as obsessive–compulsive disorder or else obsessive–compulsive personality disorder, may affect up to 6% of the adult population. Excessive hoarding can lead to death due to fire risk or the falling of large numbers of possessions resulting in an avalanche. It also frequently coexists with self-neglect and – owing to the extreme shame – social isolation. Nevertheless, few community mental health teams in the UK offer comprehensive treatment for hoarding disorders. Some enlightened councils have developed hoarding protocols incorporating housing agencies, social services, and mental and physical health services but overall these are patchy and rare.

Hopefully, heightened awareness will lead to systematic research and a better understanding of the disorders and their treatment, as well as the development of effective services. This handbook would be a perfect introduction to these areas

for a busy practitioner seeking brief but authoritative information.

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Shrink Wrapped: Tales from Psychiatrists

Edited by Ros Humphrey and Sarah Dorrington
Strange Barnets Press 2016, £8.99, pb, 105 pp.
ISBN: 9781526202956

There is something that feels a little otherworldly about *Shrink Wrapped*. As readers, we are invited to find our way into the psychiatrist's mind, to take our bearings from this anonymous collection of short anecdotes and reflections, written by psychiatrists, as a point of departure into understanding what it might mean to be a modern-day 'shrink'. We find warm, affectionate and humorous musings that are abruptly punctured by sharper observations, memories painful to revisit, self-doubt, recrimination and a sense of ever-questioned legitimacy. It is an honest, undiluted look into the experiences of eight psychiatrists, the whispered, confessional moments that blurred the boundaries of their personal and professional lives.

There is a strength of variety to the collection and, at its best, it draws us into questioning ourselves: what kind of a psychiatrist have I become and how did I get here? Does the voice I'm reading remind me of my own thoughts or my own journey? There are, however, one or two weaker moments alongside: in its editorial efforts to be snapshot-succinct, it can sometimes feel frustratingly whimsical and underdeveloped, like a string of highly promising film trailers. There are also passages that veer a little close to what might be found in the reflective practice section of an online portfolio.

Shrink Wrapped is as intimate and conversational as a cup of tea with a close colleague. It considers our own professional self-consciousness, 'the navel-gazing and self-doubt' that besiege our specialty, and takes a frank, unabashed look at the inevitable cross-pollination of our work and life experiences. The collection provides the reader with moments of piercing honesty, such as this summation from one particularly candid contributor, reflecting on what she, as a psychiatrist, might represent: 'I am very clearly a middle class professional White woman who is sitting here telling [the patient] what is happening.'

But who was this woman? Indeed, who were any of these interviewees? Their names are listed in the acknowledgements but not alongside any of their own contributions, an editorial device which purports to leave us free to explore the book in our own way. I found this troubling, untethering, as if I were experiencing these voices in an alternative space. It felt more in service to the interviewees, in defining the boundaries of the reader–writer relationship. It reminded me a little of the dynamic in clinic: you might be able to learn something about a psychiatrist, but not on your own terms. A lot will also be held back.

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