

In my experience psychoeducation is an invaluable tool in engaging patients in therapy and this chapter allows the clinician to become proficient in the same.

A very comprehensive presentation of the available evidence base for treatment of OCD follows. Short commentaries on each study are provided. I particularly liked the section dealing with antidepressant side-effects and drug interactions. Included is a discussion of psychotherapeutic treatment; however, it would perhaps have been useful to discuss further the cognitive theories underlying the belief systems in OCD. These I have found particularly helpful in psychoeducation and engagement in therapy and would have added to the richness of this chapter. Particularly useful is the chapter providing rating scales, reference books and websites for patients and clinicians. Overall an enjoyable and clinically useful book.

Tracy Ryan Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Morningside Park, Edinburgh EH10 5HF, UK.
Email: tracy.x.ryan@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.042234



Understanding Psychoanalysis

By Matthew Sharpe
& Joanne Faulkner.
Acumen. £13.99 (pb). 230pp.
ISBN: 9781844651221

I was excited at the prospect of reviewing a book called, *Understanding Psychoanalysis*. As most practitioners of the art (or is it a science?) will tell you, we still long, no matter how experienced, to 'get hold' of psychoanalysis. Sadly, however, this moment was followed by disappointment: this book was written not by practitioners, but by two philosophers. Moreover, as the back cover alarmingly brought to my attention, these 'leading psychoanalytic theorists' would be covering such diverse topics as post-structuralism, cultural theory and feminism. My suspicions aroused, I glanced at the index and found that neither randomised controlled trials nor evidence-based medicine got a mention. I was beginning to wonder why it had been chosen for review?

To my relief, I was soon to learn that this book was to be a mind-expanding experience. The authors manage with great skill to communicate the fundamental tenets of key figures in the psychoanalytic pantheon. These include the obvious such as Freud and Klein (with a smattering on Winnicott and Bion), as well as the less obvious – to a British audience at least – like Lacan. Helpfully, a key points format is used throughout to summarise arcane, and sometimes dense, psychoanalytic and philosophical concepts.

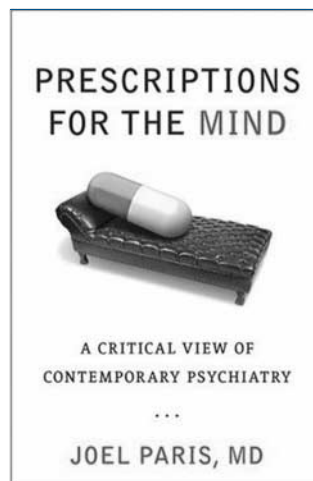
Freud in particular is brought to life. At a time when his obituary is habitually rehearsed, his ideas are presented in a way

that is thoroughly of the moment and apposite – see, for example, what he has to teach us about the compulsive nature of the addictions and self-harm. The authors revisit his meta-psychological outpourings in a way that is accessible and vibrant. We are also treated to a re-reading of the Freudian text at a time when there is an attack on complexity and a hatred of dependency. There is no easy sense here that those with profound mental illness are engaged in recovery, or that depression and anxiety will be dealt with after a course of computerised therapy or short-term cognitive-behavioural therapy, wherein, psychoanalytically speaking, the idealised world of the all-giving breast will be finally realised.

So, setting aside minor technical quibbles, and allowing for the omission of the recent work on mentalisation, if you are after a little time away from achieving your targets and returning, even if for the first time, to thinking about your patients in a way that does justice to the bewildering, sometimes grotesque, glory that is humankind, then this book comes highly recommended.

Jack Nathan Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE22 0DP, UK. Email: jacknathan54@hotmail.co.uk

doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.108.056382



Prescriptions for the Mind: A Critical View of Contemporary Psychiatry

By Joel Paris.
Oxford University Press. 2008.
£15.99 (hb). 272pp.
ISBN: 9780195313833

This is a thoughtful assessment of modern-day psychiatry. In essence it is a plea for a balance between biological psychiatry and psychotherapeutic approaches. Paris emphasises the limitations of current knowledge about the brain, presenting the failure to find genetic markers for psychiatric conditions, the non-specificity of neuroanatomical abnormalities and the inconsistency of biochemical research. His analysis of psychiatric diagnosis is particularly interesting. In the absence of biological markers of disease, Paris suggests, psychiatric diagnoses are simply pragmatic constructs, and he criticises the tendency to view them as real entities. He explores the difficulty of distinguishing disorder from normality and the tendency to pathologise more and more aspects of everyday life. He repeatedly criticises the tendency to over-diagnose mental disorders and over-prescribe psychiatric drugs. In particular, he highlights what he believes to be the misuse of the diagnosis of bipolar disorder in adults and children. He even suggests that the use of this diagnosis to justify the widespread initiation of long-term therapy with atypical antipsychotics and mood stabilisers could be 'one of the worst scandals in the history of psychiatry' (p. 82).