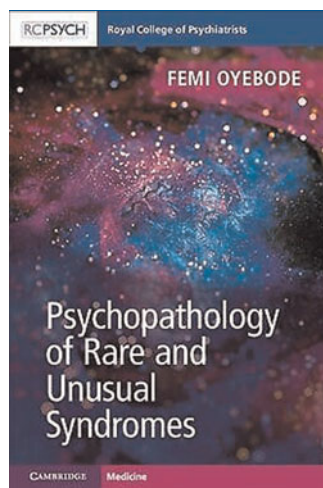


Within these broad points there is certainly more ‘over-a-drink’ debate to be had. For example, I am less ‘anti’ SSRIs than Professor Shorter, who to my mind fails to grasp that the tricyclics of which he, like myself, is a fan are poorly tolerated compounds, a week’s supply of which can be lethal. The rise of the SSRIs may have been energised by industry but without that massive safety advantage they would have struggled to reach their current, inappropriately dizzying heights. And I would have approached his work more positively had his title been less attention-grabbing. Personally, the book did not persuade that there is or was an ‘age’ of psychopharmacology and I did not, on completing it, find much to support its putative ‘fall’ as a scientific discipline. I could perhaps have related better to a slight modification: ‘The Rise and Fall of the Age of the Psychopharmacologist’, that inappropriately named ‘expert’ who abandoned ‘psyche’ expertise for a ‘pharmacology’ in which most had few, if any, skills.

On removing this book from its envelope I was amazed that I, of all people, should have been sent such a title to review for this journal. But I thank the editors that they did. There is much in this book to inform all psychiatrists – and who knows, a good deal from which we, as a profession, might actually learn.

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Psychopathology of Rare and Unusual Syndromes

By Femi Oyeboode
Cambridge University Press. 2021.
£34.99 (pb). 272 pp.
ISBN 9781108716772

One of the fundamental disciplines in psychiatry, without doubt, is psychopathology. It is one of the skills that is unique to

psychiatrists and enables them to venture into an unknown realm – the patient’s mind – and make sense of a myriad of experiences endured by the patient. Unfortunately, in recent years there has been a decline in the importance that has been given to this discipline, to the extent that I have seen it reduced to a mere list of signs and symptoms. Thankfully, there are reasons for hope and one scholar who has been instrumental in the promotion and development of psychopathology is Professor Femi Oyeboode. His new book, *Psychopathology of Rare and Unusual Syndromes*, approaches psychopathology from the viewpoint of its rare syndromes.

In this book, Oyeboode takes us through a wide range of unusual syndromes in psychiatry, showing the diverse range of human experience. These syndromes might be rare, but they show that the capacity of the human mind to perceive and participate in the world is indeed extensive. In addition, the book reminds us that not everyone with mental illness suffers from the common mental disorders. Although these syndromes would not be on top of our list of differential diagnoses, there are people who suffer from them and it is important to be aware of them.

The book has sections on abnormalities of belief, perception, self, memory, experience of the body and behaviour. I was particularly pleased to see conditions such as Diogenes syndrome, body integrity identity disorder and the Ganser state included, as I have had patients suffering from them. Each chapter of the book includes a description of the condition, explanatory hypotheses and, best of all, case vignettes that make this book a joy to read. Oyeboode’s prose is excellent as always. The book is well researched, with a comprehensive list of references.

The most important contribution of this book is to bring our focus back to psychopathology. These conditions might be rare and unusual, but the way the book maps onto different areas of psychopathology makes it easy to link each section to the corresponding one in general psychopathology textbooks. Reliance on diagnostic manuals prevents psychiatrists from understanding the wide range of experiences of patients with such disorders and prevents them from being able to understand those experiences and help patients to make sense of them. By showing this wide range of patients’ experiences, this book could direct professionals towards further study of psychopathology.

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