

Reviews

A Clinician's Brief Guide to the Mental Health Act

Tony Zigmond

RCPsych Publications, 2011, £18.00, pb, 126 pp.

ISBN: 9781908020024

Book titles, even in the case of non-fiction, can sometimes be ambiguous, unintentionally misleading or even deliberately obscure. This is definitely not so with Dr Zigmond's new guide to the Mental Health Act. It is exactly as described. A short, as the preface puts it, 'how to' reference. Its strengths include a focus on practical aspects of the operation of the Act together with its clarity, brevity and common-sense approach. That is not to say it lacks detail or sophistication. It certainly does not. But it is easy to find one's way around and the book deals with the sort of issues that arise in day-to-day practice for all of us, whether involved in the care of detained patients or not. As well as providing guidance on the amended 1983 legislation, it describes common law principles, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, human rights provision and the Mental Capacity Act. One of the attractions is that in many of the chapters the relevant law is explored and then questions that might, and in my experience do arise, are posed and answered. For instance, in the chapter on appeals against detention/compulsion: 'What are the possibilities if you think the tribunal has been procedurally flawed or made an incorrect decision?'. And there are lists of which form is required for what purpose; invaluable to anyone fulfilling the role of responsible clinician. In places the author gives his own views, sometimes written in the first person, on matters that arise, which, given the breadth and depth of his experience in the field, only serve to make the book more interesting. Unfortunately, not even he is able to unravel entirely the complexities of consent to treatment. As he says at the outset, 'This isn't an easy topic', although his is as good an exposition as I know of.

I suspect that this book will become a favourite, not only with busy, experienced clinicians, but particularly trainees. And so it should. There is no substitute for reference to the Act itself but of course things are much more complicated than that. So here is a straightforward text written for doctors operating the law that can only serve to enhance their practice and in my view improve patient care.

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Antipsychotics and their Side Effects

Edited by David M. Gardner and Michael D. Teehan
Cambridge University Press, 2010, £35.00, pb, 228 pp.

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The first section of this book comprises 20 chapters reviewing specific side-effects of antipsychotics. In addition to well-known side-effects such as hyperprolactinaemia, extrapyramidal symptoms, weight gain and diabetes there

are chapters on relatively ignored side-effects including urinary incontinence, ocular effects and hepatic effects. Information is clearly laid out and the Extrapyramidal Symptom Rating Scale included as an appendix is a useful addition. Data from several recent and important randomised controlled trials are discussed; this includes the CATIE study in chronic schizophrenia and the CAFE study in patients with first-episode psychosis. However, there is little mention of side-effect data from recent meta-analyses, which could have informed the discussion on relative risk. In addition, there are no data on the side-effect profile of amisulpride.

The second section provides side-effect monitoring schedules for 22 antipsychotic drugs. The schedules only differ in the suggested frequency of monitoring of certain side-effects. With a few notable exceptions, the most obvious being clozapine, I felt it was unnecessarily complicated and unrealistic to suggest different monitoring schedules for each drug.

The final section of the book presents a general antipsychotic monitoring form that allows clinicians to record side-effects on a regular basis during treatment. This may act as a prompt and also to facilitate the tracking of side-effects over time.

Unfortunately, the book has a major weakness: there is no information on the management of side-effects. Once an apparent side-effect is detected, a clinician must try to determine whether it is a true side-effect or has causation independent of the suspected antipsychotic drug. The impact on the patient needs to be assessed and various management options considered, with the patient being fully involved. These issues are not taken into account. In addition, the practical challenges of side-effect monitoring, including integrating the role of primary and secondary care, are only discussed briefly.

Antipsychotic side-effects can impair quality of life, contribute to poor adherence and in some case lead to secondary physical health problems. Audits have repeatedly shown that the monitoring of antipsychotic side-effects in clinical practice is poor. This book will certainly help address that by raising the profile of antipsychotic side-effects and systematic monitoring, yet the lack of guidance on management reduces its clinical utility.

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Antipsychotic Long-acting Injections

Edited by Peter Haddad, Tim Lambert and John Lauriello
Oxford University Press, 2010, £32.95, pb, 282 pp.
ISBN: 9780199586042

This book could quite easily be subtitled 'back to basics', detailing as it does how to use effectively a form of treatment that many psychiatrists and members of multidisciplinary teams might consider outmoded. What has caused us to reappraise the value of delivering antipsychotic medication by a long-acting parenteral route? The past decade has been a