Book Review


Dr Tyrer has attempted an almost impossible task but one which writers of exam essays will recognize: "Critically compare and contrast the following with particular emphasis to practical diagnostic, treatment and prognostic value and research applicability". To have considered "Classification of Neurosis" in this style is no mean feat in itself. To have achieved the aim in such a balanced way is all the more impressive.

The first two chapters concentrate on the concept of neurosis as viewed from the International Classification of Disease (ICD) and Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) perspectives; highlighted similarities, differences and overlaps. Further, changes in groupings and categories from previous diagnostic systems are discussed.

The remaining six chapters examine in extraordinary detail the diagnostic categories individually. I was particularly impressed by the personable style of writing which illuminated the difficult task in hand. Frequent detailed references to extensive case history vignettes constantly reinforced the view that accurate definition and usage of terminology and acute observation of psychopathology is a clinical issue of great importance not a dry topic reserved for the deliberations of protected non practising academics. Clarity of thought, it is shown, will reduce ambiguous or misleading diagnostic classification, and provide helpful additional information on likely associated factors, treatment approaches and prognostic indicators. Dr Tyrer, however, honestly and openly discusses the ambiguous research, stigma and diagnostic conundrums which have plagued this subject over the years, yet does not yield to the pressure to discard "neurosis" as a viable concept. The debates presented are, as is the rest of the book, based on an extensive practical application to the subject of the vast literature available. We are indeed fortunate to have collected such a useful bibliography with which the ardent can extend their detailed knowledge further. I doubt, however, whether the arguments would appear with more clarity.

The compact size of this book disguises its extraordinary value principally for the trainee psychiatrist, academic or clinical psychiatrist, but also for those in the related specialties. The author comprehensively and with surprising clarity guides the reader through the contentious issues and diagnostic problems of the classification of neurotic disorders. The reader is left with the impression, as pupil to a great teacher, of the simplicity of even the most complex hypotheses; until the book is no longer at hand when the grey areas loom large again.

Dr Tyrer's approach is thoroughly practical and readable with extensive clinical amplification of difficult areas encountered in the classification systems of DSMIII/DSMIII-R and ICD 10, whether it be for clinical or research use. It is a book to which I will continue to refer when faced by yet
another patient who seems to defy the pure academic descriptions for classification or the registrar who asks: can you explain...? My response “try reading the chapter in Tyrer...”

Susan J. Johnston
Submit your manuscripts at http://www.hindawi.com