

BOOK REVIEW

By M. Hassib

The Psychiatric Evaluation in Clinical Practice. By : Roger A. Mackinnon and Stuart C. Yudofsky. Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott Company, 1986.

This is not a textbook in psychiatry but a synthesized coherent mixture of psychiatric knowledge and skills for the clinician - researcher student. It has a different taste and it is a delight to read. Makinnon who is a training supervising psychoandys and Yudofsky who is a biologically oriented psychiatrist, both worked together and presented this combination of extensive practical evaluations with good discussion in simple clear statements that are suitable for those preparing to sit for psychiatric examinations or those interested in pursuing a research career.

The book is composed of 294 pages, six chapters and a style of biopsychodynamic approaches to psychiatric disorders. As the title reflects, the main task all-through the chapters is the "how" of assessment in down-to-earth clinical every-day practice. The six chapters are : Psychiatric interviewing, clinical examination, biological testing, evaluation of cortical functioning, psychological testings and rating scales, and diagnosis and psychodynamic case formulation.

In the first chapter, one finds the taste and smell of the air of an experienced, understanding, skillful and tactful clinician who guides the reader with illustrative examples of what to do, not to do, say, try to feel, and achieve during interviewing psychiatric patients. Details of time and space consideration are provided and this makes one read this chapter with attention like watching a videotaped interview. Heavy emphasis is on the art and techniques rather than theoretical formulation. The task is to present a model style with some professional incompleteness.

The second chapter of clinical examination of the patient is a standard one like many other textbooks. However, the samples and reports provided at the end of this chapter makes such presentation live and I found it very helpful to

read a comprehensive scenario of mental status assessment written by an experienced clinician. It is learning by modeling.

The chapter on biological testing in psychiatry represents an updated well-written practical guide to those interested in reviewing the state of the art in laboratory and neuroradiological and imaging techniques. This chapter focuses on the role and discusses the limitations and the potential values of these testings. The biological testing includes hormones, neuroleptics, antidepressants, CT scan, NMR and others.

The fourth chapter of evaluation of regional cortical functioning is a mixture of neurophysiology and neuropsychological assessments. Again, the emphasis is on the practical role-for the busy psychiatrist-of these issues. A helpful differential diagnosis based on clinical evaluation is provided throughout this chapter.

The last two chapters are assets to the book. The fifth chapter provides reliable instruments for use in clinical practice for those psychiatrists (and / or researchers) obsessed with measurements and reliability. This chapter also provides an overview of some psychological and neuropsychological instruments. Examples like Beck, Hamilton, Global, Overt Aggression rating scales are provided. The last chapter is a model for thinking in psychiatric practice and understanding. Well-written case formulations are presented, analysed and discussed. Reading these formulations makes the original task of practical evaluation near completion. Dynamics and features are woven and put together to reach a coherent picture of human beings seen every day by the busy psychiatrists. The pictures drawn are given to supply the practically oriented psychiatrists with armamentarium of understanding and techniques to comprehensively assess the psychopathology and dynamics of their patients.

Overall, this book is a very valuable and helpful companion to be read by both juniors and seniors in the field of psychiatric practice.