



BOOK AND VIDEO REVIEW



THE SUSPENDED REVOLUTION

Psychiatry and psychotherapy re-examined

Faber and Faber, London (1990)

224 pages. Price £14.99

The author, a psychiatric consultant and clinical researcher at Cambridge university, expresses concern that the scientific advance of mental illness has ground to a halt. Freud's successful ideas are blamed for psychotherapy becoming wholly practical, and the eventual separation of psychiatric practice from psychology theory; patients who came for help were felt to be a help, and were deeply admired by some of their therapists. This is regarded as unacceptable by David Healy, who sees such responses as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Psychoanalysis is said to be of a religious character rather than a sober science, and what is badly needed is a theoretical basis.

The brain is mechanical, yet the mind contained in that machine is not mechanical, but thinking. Brain tumours are hardware disorders, neuroses are software disorders — what, therefore is mental illness? Can science really contribute anything? The art of medicine has to be made more scientific to improve our understanding. But much is achieved by our patient-centred approach, rather than a disease-centred approach; and there is a need for greater awareness. The author points out that mathematics and physics are not applicable to psychiatry. He himself presents an ideal scientific approach: disciplined scepticism. His book is truly fascinating, and well worth reading.

JACK NORELL

General practitioner, London

HEALTH MEASUREMENT SCALES

A practical guide to their development and use

David L Streiner and Geoffrey R Norman

Oxford University Press (1989)

175 pages. Price £25.00

This book aims to introduce 'health sciences' researchers to concepts of measurement and as such, it is a timely if not very radical contribution. The rapid expansion of the health measurement field may be characterized by the diversity (and sometimes absence) of conceptual definitions and by its multi-disciplinary nature. Both factors, while having positive potential, can create methodological problems. The authors address this by returning to the basic principles of the design and assessment of measurement scales.

Chapters reflect stages in the development process, including

literature review, item selection, scaling, response biases, reliability and validity, generalizability, and methods of administration. Marginally more esoteric issues such as latent-trait theory and the requirements of change measures are also covered. Useful appendices direct the reader to sources (all North American) where the topics are explored in more detail. The principles covered by the book should already be well understood by social and behavioural scientists but they may be less familiar to those from other disciplines, such as medicine and economics, who are currently involved in health measurement.

The emphasis on such fundamental principles in a book about health measurement, particularly with the admirable and consistent use of examples from relevant literature, may encourage improvements in methodological coherency. However, it is disappointing that the conceptual and philosophical issues raised by health measurement are not more fully discussed, because methodological progress is ultimately constrained by theoretical development. The undoubted need for books like this may be partly attributable to the paucity of coherent theory.

SIMON A NAJI

*Research fellow, Health Services Research Unit,
University of Aberdeen*

ANXIETY AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Trevor J Powell and Simon J Enright

Routledge, Chapman and Hall, London (1989)

196 pages. Price £9.99

This useful book is the first in a series on strategies for mental health. Forthcoming titles will include *Assertiveness training*, *Bereavement and loss* and *Rehabilitation and community care*. If these volumes are of the same high standard as this book then they may, as the series title implies, have a positive effect on mental health.

The contents of this book divide into four parts: the first part looks at the research underpinning theories of stress and anxiety, the second describes a wide range of assessment procedures, the third and by far the largest section looks at management strategies, and a final section uses clinical cases to demonstrate the application of the strategies which are described.

The stated aim of the authors is to demystify symptoms and to provide individuals with coping skills. There are skills here in abundance for the general practitioner and other members of the primary health care team. At a personal level there are useful sections on goal planning and time management, and the chapters on self-help techniques, changing client's lifestyles and