



ANXIETY: RECOGNITION AND TREATMENT IN GENERAL PRACTICE

Greg Wilkinson

Radcliffe Medical Press, Oxford (1991)

80 pages. Price £8.50

Anxiety is a common presenting symptom in general practice and Professor Wilkinson's slim book contains all the information that the average general practitioner will need to recognize, assess and treat the condition.

Lists of symptoms and definitions of related disorders are provided but the overall impression is of a repetitive text which does not enrich the reader's understanding of this complex and fascinating disorder which is often difficult to treat. Also, while there are three pages of references, these are not linked with the text so one is left wondering, for example, if there is evidence for the statement that the tricyclic antidepressants 'are probably the drugs of choice' when indicated in long term anxiety disorders.

The book is intended to be read primarily by general practitioners and trainees but the publishers state that the information it contains will also be helpful for nurses in the community. What is not clear is the type of community nurses to whom this refers; a nurse without any special training in psychiatric disorders may not read further than the first page. This would be a pity for the chapter on treating anxiety which appears later in the book provides a clear description of who can help an anxious patient and what techniques and drugs are available to manage the condition.

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PRESCRIBING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

A review by the RCGP Prescribing Fellow in Scotland.

Occasional paper 54

J D Gillegan

Royal College of General Practitioners, London (1991)

36 pages. Price £7.50

The implementation of indicative prescribing and the recent revision of guidelines for prescribing at the general practitioner-hospital interface have once more focused attention on prescribing in general practice. This paper is a broad, comprehensive and timely review of the subject. Variations in prescribing patterns, influences on prescribing from patients and from other doctors, how doctors choose drugs and what information sources they use are all discussed. Advice is proffered on prescription writing and on running a repeat prescribing system (manual or computerized). Formularly development, generic prescribing and the early adoption of original pack dispensing are all advocated. In addition, prescribing in general practitioner hospitals and residential homes, dispensing doctors, product liability, adverse drug reactions and the changing role

of pharmacists are all touched upon. There is comment on the provision of prescribing information feedback and the role of the pharmaceutical industry. The Viewdata drug information service (VADIS), a computerized drug information system is described. All this is achieved with admirable brevity and clarity and backed up by an extensive range of references.

The recommendations made are, however, something of a mixed bag. Some are rather pious assertions while others seem impractical or naive. A few are truly innovative and several are provocative. Curiously, some good suggestions in the text did not make it to the final list of recommendations. While many recommendations are based on the evidence reviewed, others seem to arise from hearsay and conjecture. Overall, though, this paper is thought provoking and is bound to stimulate interesting debate.

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THE LIMITS OF MEDICAL PATERNALISM

Heta Hayry

Routledge, London (1991)

208 pages. Price £30.00

In this book Heta Hayry presents a detailed review of past and present thinking on paternalism generally and in relation to medicine. Her own interpretation, which is strongly anti-paternalistic, is well argued.

The book is divided into seven chapters, five of which look more generally at paternalism in society and map the development of thought on the subject. She painstakingly presents the arguments of proponents for and against paternalism as well as her own views on the subject. The author turns a detailed eye on concepts such as freedom, constraint, autonomy, morals, rationality and prudentialism, before applying these ideas in a discussion of the medical limits of paternalism in the last chapter. This wide ranging, and for me the most interesting, section of the book touches on subjects as diverse as the ethics of seat belt legislation, punitive tobacco taxes, euthanasia and informed consent.

I found this book quite difficult to read and were it not for the fact that I was reviewing the text and have an interest in this subject, I doubt if I would have read beyond the second chapter. This would have been a pity as the author is clearly knowledgeable on the subject and undoubtedly has reviewed the literature in depth. It is a failing perhaps of many books and essays in this field that they are somewhat impenetrable for the average reader, the price perhaps of precision.

I do not see this book as having a niche in the practice library, but it should certainly be kept by the larger medical libraries as it is a valuable addition to the literature on this subject.

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