

Book Reviews

Michael H. Ebert, M.D., Editor

Mastering Forensic Psychiatric Practice: Advanced Strategies for the Expert Witness

by Thomas G. Gutheil, M.D., and Robert I. Simon, M.D.
American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., Washington, D.C.,
2002, 160 pages, \$30.95 (paper).

This is a fine book for psychiatrists who want to sharpen their expert witness skills. *Mastering Forensic Psychiatric Practice* is an easy-to-read, concise, and enjoyable guide to understanding the finer points of psychiatric testimony, developing a forensic practice, and relating to attorneys, both allies and adversaries. The authors assumed the reader has some familiarity with the practice of forensic psychiatry and geared the book toward the privately retained expert as opposed to a public institution employee. The content ranges from the basic role of the expert to practical business topics and sticky ethical dilemmas one is sure to face in practice. Drs. Gutheil and Simon are experienced forensic psychiatrists and prolific authors. Some of the material in this handbook was previously published in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* and elsewhere.

One of the strong points is the presentation of actual legal situations with outcomes accompanied by the authors' commentary and discussion. These clinical/legal vignettes serve to further clarify and emphasize the main points of each section. Another asset is the inclusion of several ethical dilemmas followed by provocative questions for the reader to consider. One such vignette involves an expert who uses "screeners" to help prepare and sort through the case materials prior to viewing them. The questions raised include "Is this an ethical practice?" and "May, should, or must the retaining attorney be informed of the situation?" (p. 131).

The authors emphasize the importance of not advocating for a particular side and not being personally invested in the outcome of a case. However, they assert that the expert "may ethically state his or her opinion persuasively" (p. 5). Other useful tidbits mentioned several times are that experts should always remember to consider malingering when interviewing subjects and should remind the interviewees that they are not patients receiving treatment from a clinician, but clients undergoing a nonconfidential psychiatric assessment.

This guide contains material that may be helpful to the psychiatrist who is organizing the administrative aspect of a practice. For instance, the text includes "A Model Consent Form" and "Model Fee Agreement Guidelines." There is a detailed discussion of the fees experts charge and whether to use formal fee agreements or require retainers. Perhaps the best chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the surprising vicissitudes of experts' relationships with attorneys. This chapter includes "the assumed opinion" (at the initial phone call, the attorney asks the expert to agree to a particular conclusion), "selected data" (the attorney withholds significant records from the expert), "the desperate expert" (who takes on a highly problematic case because of his or her own financial or personal needs), and other interesting situations.

Overall, *Mastering Forensic Psychiatric Practice* will be very useful for both the seasoned expert witness and those who have some forensic experience and are eager to learn more. It is a guide that covers a range of topics that forensic psychiatrists are likely to encounter either in everyday practice or in isolated cases.

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Essential Psychopharmacology of Antipsychotics and Mood Stabilizers

by Stephen M. Stahl, M.D., Ph.D. Cambridge University Press,
New York, N.Y., 2002, 150 pages, \$33.00 (paper).

The author of this excellent new book, Dr. Stephen M. Stahl, should be well known to readers of this journal. Dr. Stahl has written a number of widely used psychopharmacology instruction books and also writes a monthly neurobiology column for *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. All of his writing is characterized by a clarity of presentation and a notable ability to transform complicated scientific principles into readily understood prose. Characteristically, he illustrates his instructions with informative, charming, and sometimes witty cartoon figures and diagrams.

This new volume from Dr. Stahl is an update of the antipsychotic and mood stabilizer chapters from his previous very successful text *Essential Psychopharmacology: Neuroscientific Basis and Practical Applications*. The book is essentially divided into 2 sections: the neurobiology of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and the clinical use of treatments of these disorders. Dr. Stahl provides instructions for how to use his book: "go through the material from beginning to end, reviewing only the color graphics and the legends for these graphics" (p. vii). Having gone through all the graphics in the chapters, the reader is then directed to return to the beginning of the book and read the entire text, reviewing the graphics at the same time.

Who is this book good for? There are really 2 answers to this question. The neurobiology sections are, in the author's own words, the fundamentals of psychopharmacology in a simplified and readily readable format. It is not likely that researchers and academicians will find new information from the cartoons or the text, although they are an excellent way to update and review complicated information. Based on an informal poll of readers, some visually oriented individuals love the cartoons and others find them a bit annoying.

The second part of the book, the clinical recommendations, however, should be helpful to all readers. Dr. Stahl is clearly an experienced and wise clinician. His recommendations for the use of antipsychotics and mood-stabilizing drugs reflect the cur-

rent state of the art but are modified with his own guidelines of caution and precision. I was particularly impressed with his discussion of combining neuroleptic drugs for treatment-resistant schizophrenia. While acknowledging that this is a common practice, Dr. Stahl appropriately cautions about the routine use of such polypharmacy and observes that "it is possible to get trapped in cross titration" (p. 124). I couldn't agree more! In these clinical discussions, the cartoon figures become less useful and virtually irrelevant; the text speaks for itself, and does so clearly.

Dr. Stahl has a gift for teaching, and it is a pleasure to recommend this book.

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Pediatric Psychopharmacology: Principles and Practice

edited by Andrés Martin, M.D., M.P.H.; Lawrence Scahill, Ph.D.; Dennis S. Charney, M.D.; and James F. Leckman, M.D. Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y., 2003, 791 pages, \$129.95.

Pediatric Psychopharmacology: Principles and Practice represents the first comprehensive volume in child and adolescent psychiatry that brings together, in one exhaustive and well-referenced tome, an integration of the current knowledge in the burgeoning field of pediatric psychopharmacology and neurobiology as it impacts the treatment of children and adolescents with psychiatric disorders. This is a textbook on pediatric psychopharmacology, as the title implies, but it is much more than that because the authors have achieved their stated goals of incorporating psychopharmacology as one component in the total approach aimed at the most effective treatment of psychiatrically ill children and adolescents. As such, *Pediatric Psychopharmacology* may well find its place on the bookshelves, alongside other reference volumes, of all who treat children and adolescents with psychiatric disorders. The book is a constant resource for information regarding the neurobiology of child psychiatric disorders, the assessment and treatment of these disorders from a developmental perspective, the pediatric psychopharmacology of the substances that are used to treat these disorders, as well as guidelines for the use of psychotropic medications involved.

The book is divided into 4 sections, each containing well-defined chapters that make it easy for the reader interested in a

particular topic to zoom in on the information while providing a context for more extensive exploration of the field when time permits. Section 1 is a textbook in itself, providing an extensive review of what is known about the biological underpinnings of pediatric psychopharmacology including neurobiology, genetics, and developmental psychopathology across discrete clinical and diagnostic categories.

Section 2, Somatic Interventions, methodically reviews the drug categories typically used in child psychiatry, emphasizing developmental influences on pharmacodynamics and kinetics, as well as regulatory issues related to children. The section ends with critical and informative chapters addressing alternative medications and electroconvulsive therapy.

Section 3 is devoted to assessment and treatment. Of particular interest are the initial chapters, which establish a framework for the child and adolescent psychiatrist to approach the "whole child" through careful diagnosis and monitored treatment. A very interesting and useful chapter on psychological aspects of prescribing to children and adolescents is included. The remainder of this section is devoted to disorder-specific chapters with some additional chapters related to special populations such as preschoolers, the medically ill, pregnancy and infancy, substance abusing populations, comorbidity with mental retardation, and specific clinical concerns of agitation, aggression, and elimination disorders. These disorder-specific chapters are full of clinical examples and treatment algorithms that represent expert consensus guidelines whenever available.

The final section, Epidemiological, Research, and Methodological Considerations, brings to the forefront ethical and scientific challenges in both the use of psychopharmacology in children and adolescents and the conduct of research with this population. The appendix includes a 7-page chart that summarizes the various drug categories, mechanisms of action, indications, dosages, and treatment schedules, along with side effect profiles.

Pediatric Psychopharmacology: Principles and Practice is an invaluable resource that summarizes in concise detail the state-of-the-art knowledge base of neurobiology and psychopharmacology for pediatric patients while integrating it into a framework that considers the total patient in a much broader treatment context. As science in these areas continues to accrue at phenomenal speed, this text may need scientific updating, but its basic precepts will serve the clinician well into the 21st century.

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