

Psychopharmacology: The Fourth Generation of Progress

edited by Floyd E. Bloom and David J. Kupfer. New York, NY: Raven Press, 1995, 2002 pages.

Psychopharmacology: The Fourth Generation of Progress is the most comprehensive and up-to-date text on neuropsychopharmacology available. While I must admit I have not read it cover-to-cover (that monumental task would take several back-to-back sabbaticals) what I have read is thorough, complete, and lucid. The authors, largely but not entirely drawn from the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, generally represent the most authoritative scholars in the world in each given area. What is most unique about the text is that it pays almost equal attention to basic neuroscience, clinical psychiatry, and clinical neurology. Thus, it is an encyclopedic text that is meant to be used as a reference guide for anyone interested in the treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders.

The book is divided into 3 major sections. Parts I and II, the Preclinical and Clinical sections, are organized in parallel subsections: an interesting "Overview," several chapters on critical analyses of methods, followed by several chapters on transmitter systems in the Preclinical section and psychiatric/neurologic disorders in the Clinical section, and concluding with a series of chapters on integrative concepts. Extensive cross-referencing between Preclinical and Clinical subjects helps the reader interpret how psychiatry is at once a story of the way the brain works as well as a tool to restore functions destroyed by brain disorders. The final section, Special Topics, provides cutting edge discussions of several contemporary issues, such as the impact of molecular biology on new drug design, ethical issues in gene screening and therapy, economic assessment, sociocultural considerations, and violence.

An example of how this book can be used can be gleaned from my recent excursion into its depths to update a psychiatry residency lecture on the treatment of depression. First, several of the 19 chapters on mood disorders provided an excellent overview of clinical pharmacology, short- and long-term treatments, bipolar disorders, issues related to women, ECT, novel approaches, and treatment resistance. To go into greater detail on mechanisms, I referred to several Preclinical chapters on neurotransmitters, receptors and receptor subtypes, signal transduction, and second/third messenger systems. This review helped me pull together a veritable explosion of new information I had been hearing about, but never before had seen so well laid out and organized. To complete my preparation, I reviewed additional chapters on mood disorders from the sections on geriatric and childhood disorders and skimmed relevant sections of the surprisingly rich chapter on "Ethnicity, Culture and Psychopharmacology."

Needless to say, I could have done equally comprehensive reviews of most other major psychiatric disorders. However, at the risk of suggesting more paper be added to this already weighty volume, anxiety disorders may be somewhat short changed. I would like to have seen more attention to treatment of specific disorders (e.g., social phobias, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder), in the Clinical section.

As much as I appreciated and utilized the previous edition, *Psychopharmacology: The Third Generation of Progress*, this latest edition is even better. It will be a few years before it also will need some pruning and refurbishing. In the meanwhile, it is the book in my crowded office that gets the most use.

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