

Expert Psychiatric Evidence

by Keith J. B. Rix, MD. RCPsych Publications, London, UK, 2011, 320 pages, \$80.00 (hardcover).

The title of Dr Rix's text, *Expert Psychiatric Evidence*, is rather nondescriptive but conveys a sense of the importance with the word *evidence*. From the Introduction to the appendices, this text is aimed at providing assistance to those persons who are relatively new to the forensic arena. Upon reading the forward, I found it clear that this text is written for a British audience. Mental illness knows no borders (with some cultural exceptions), but the legal world is wrought with jurisdictions that need to be considered by those who are going to wade in the legal water. For the British audience, this book covers many areas of forensic practice that form the basis for more advanced topics and provides useful examples of reports and letters in the appendices. For audiences outside the British Isles, this text is a wonderfully detailed cultural window into the practice of forensic psychiatry abroad.

The book is well organized, and the chapters have a logical sequence. The first part involves the duties of an expert witness and other practical matters. The text then shifts into various chapters that focus on different types of reports, including those for criminal, juvenile, and civil cases. These chapters are the strongest and offer a significant amount of information. Each chapter is divided into more specific matters in which finer details are provided. For instance, the criminal proceedings chapter includes several pages on police interviewing and exceptions concerning a person's right to bail. The text concludes with a section on going to court and the importance of maintaining expertise in the field.

The British practitioner will appreciate the practicality of the text. Dr Rix offers numerous case citations and references to British law throughout that support and guide his no-nonsense prose. Although this text lacks a discussion of forensic interviewing techniques, its strengths are rooted in the details of being, and acting like, a psychiatric expert. For example, Dr Rix reminds the expert witness on cross-examination "to swivel back to face the judge and/or jury when you have heard the question" (p 221). This and other fine details about expert testimony are brought to light.

All things considered, this text is a worthy addition to the desk reference of psychiatric experts in the British Isles. For readers outside the Isles, it offers an excellent vantage point on the British practice of forensic psychiatry. Learning how others practice in the field can shed new light on our own cultural nuances and style.

Bradley W. Freeman, MD

bradley.w.freeman@vanderbilt.edu

Author affiliation: Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Tennessee.

Potential conflicts of interest: None reported.

doi:10.4088/JCP.12bk07941

© Copyright 2012 Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc.