

**Genes, Memes, Culture, and Mental Illness:
Toward an Integrative Model**

by Hoyle Leigh, MD. Springer, New York, NY, 2010, 279 pages,
\$129.00 (hardcover).

The interface of biology, evolution, and culture is exciting. Dr Leigh's book is a must-read for those who are fascinated by novel models in mental health.

In 1976, Richard Dawkins coined the term *meme* to denote bits of information that replicate themselves. These bits of information include the "percepts" created by the interaction of the brain and outside sources of information such as books and digital materials. The author makes a case for understanding mental illness in the context of memes going awry.

The book is divided into 4 sections. Section 1 explores an epigenetic model of mental illness. Dr Leigh explores the role of stress and culture in modifying memes, giving examples of migration and natural disasters. Section 2 explores the individual's mental health in the context of evolution and its relationship to genes and memes. Memetic models of culture, memory, free will, and the unconscious are explored. Section 3 explores a memetic-epigenetic model of multi-axial psychiatric diseases. The author explores various forms of therapies and prevention. Section 4 reviews 5 specific spectra of psychiatric symptomatology.

The book has interesting examples and illustrations and makes for thought-provoking reading and a stimulating journal club discussion.

Seeth Vivek, MD
seethvivek@aol.com

Author affiliation: Medisys Health Network, Jamaica, New York. **Potential conflicts of interest:** None reported.

doi:10.4088/JCP.11bk07458

© Copyright 2011 Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc.