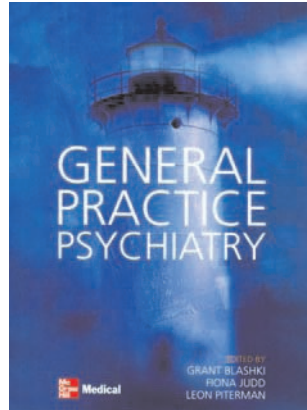


Psychiatry in practice

General practice psychiatry. Grant Blashki, Fiona Judd, Leon Piterman, editors. Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 2006 (xii + 388 pp, \$65.00). ISBN 007471351 5.

WHO MIGHT HAVE ANTICIPATED that a book dealing with psychiatry in general practice has, as its second chapter, “GP self-care”? Or that the first third of the text includes chapters on cross-cultural and Indigenous issues, consumers’ and carers’ views of general practice psychiatry, and mental health and the law, among others? What I like about this book is that it challenges conventional priorities and paradigms and offers new, unforeseen material, while retaining obligatory examination of the various psychiatric illnesses — depression, anxiety, substance misuse, psychoses, and others — encountered in general practice.

The need for general practitioners to be skilled in the assessment and management of mental health problems is unarguable. Among other reasons, these problems are very common in the community (and far too common to be seen exclusively by mental health professionals), and many sufferers choose to seek help from a GP, certainly in the first instance. In this book’s pages, the reader will



find much practical advice: there is information about assessment techniques, useful rating scales, psychological treatments and pharmacotherapy (in some detail), and strategies for difficult behaviours (eg, for the persistently angry patient or for when a staff member is a target of anger). The style is engaging, with regular use of case studies (often revisited later in a chapter), “key facts”, other lists (oddly, referred to as figures) and tables.

The editors and assembled authors have a strong reputation in this field. It is noteworthy that each chapter was co-developed by a GP, so the utility for general practice was always in the contributors’ minds.

General practice psychiatry is an ambitious book — at once attempting to be thought-provoking and to provide the “good oil” — but the editors and authors appear to have pulled it off. It is very good value for money.

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