

Reviews

Schizophrenia

Stephen Marder
Oxford University Press USA, 2014, £22.99 (pb), 104 pp.
ISBN: 9780199964659

As the author states in the introduction, there is no 'typical person' with schizophrenia. Each patient has differing needs and is burdened in various ways by symptoms or side-effects. The book aims to be relevant to all aspects of treatment, from managing first presentations to dealing with long-term complications of antipsychotic medication. It is important to note that it is not an introduction to the subject of schizophrenia. Knowledge of the definition and diagnosis of schizophrenia is assumed. This text is aimed at clinicians and is designed to be used as a tool in clinical practice by those who work with patients with schizophrenia.

The chapters take us logically from evaluation of acute psychosis to the stable phase via the issues of treatment resistance and comorbid substance misuse. The text is firmly evidence-based with reference lists in each chapter and any expert opinions clearly acknowledged. Clear subheadings contribute to the easy-to-read style and the guidance, especially in the chapter on evaluation and management of acute psychosis, is practical and safe. Using the subheadings as a framework for addressing a particular clinical situation would ensure that all aspects of mental and physical health as well as social and psychological issues would be covered.

Unfortunately, I do not feel it meets its aim of being 'person centred', and although it states that it is influenced by the recovery model, this aspect was not emphasised enough. No clear definition of recovery in schizophrenia is given and there is no guidance on how to go about supporting your patients in goal-setting. Neither is collaboration with the patient, which I associate with person-centred practice, emphasised.

The issue with this book is that it is aimed at the US market. It illustrates the differences between practice in the USA and practice in the UK, both in terms of pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.

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The Time In Between: A Memoir of Hunger and Hope

Nancy Tucker
Icon Books, 2015, £12.99 (pb), 304 pp.
ISBN: 9781848318304

I was set to condemn yet another narcissistic autobiographical account that would be pro-anorexia fodder – but the author

herself cleverly forestalls that objection. She acknowledges that we can't stop 'wannarexics' from devouring this as a motivational manual. Thus from the start, the book evokes that familiar sense of intellectual duelling between patient and clinician, with anorexia always at least one step ahead. This is one reason why I would recommend this book to any colleague with the stomach to read it, and to anyone who dares trivialise the challenge of working with people with eating disorders.

I found the spitefulness, the scorn, the superiority of anorexia quite chilling. It dehumanised Nancy, and made it hard to feel for her, although she suffered dreadfully. I laughed uncomfortably. I wondered with horror which of the three caricatured clinicians is me – Kind-face, Mean-face or Hangover face. Or, hopefully, 'Sharp Psychiatrist', even 'The Right Therapist'. Patients have made me all of these at times. I cringed at the thought of her parents reading about their 'marital(ish) bed' – a quip which outlasts the apologies and appreciations at the end.

What did I learn? Well, that out-patient weights mean next to nothing. Nancy isn't unique in 'faking' as much as 10 kg – so why do we base clinical decisions on BMI alone? I knew that anorexia is like possession by devils but I saw it afresh. I learned from the black humour of Tucker's 'questionnaires' that there are no right answers. Whatever your responses to anorexia's dilemmas, you have got it wrong. That is the dynamic.

It's a chilling read, and both gratifying and irritating in turns. Tucker is a razor-sharp thinker and writer. The satirical dramatisations and caricatures evoke a stage adaptation – perhaps *Anorexia: The Musical*. As Tucker's style matures, her archness may be used more sparingly, she may edit out such distractions as colour titles and metaphors, and attend to the overall balance of the narrative, rather than merely acknowledge its imbalance. In fact, 300 pages give us the gory details of her anorexic career, while only the final 50 are devoted to the real meat of the story, the 'time in between' which the title evokes.

But I would not change the title. The last pages are the real genius of this book. The author poignantly describes her loss of anorexic power, descent into bulimia and weight gain. She re-enters real life, makes genuine relationships (including one with 'the Right Therapist') and experiences self-compassion for the first time. The spiteful start is transformed into lyrical, youthful, purple passages about her rites of passage. I was won over.

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