

Book Review Editor
Ron Tiffen



REVIEW OF ESSENTIALS OF CHILD PSYCHIATRY

H.M Connell

Scientific Publications 2nd Edition 1985
Paperback 344 pages.

This is a second edition of this text book on Child Psychiatry and is based on lectures given to medical Students and General Practitioners. Dr. Connell regards the General Practitioner as having a crucial role in recognising Psychopathology in children and as being in the favourable position due to his intimate knowledge of a family to manage and treat behavioural (conduct) and emotional disorders. Dr. Connell expresses in the preface, her hope that this book will be valuable not only to the medical profession but also to a wide range of Allied Health Professionals engaged in work with children. The text is lucid, well presented, and should appeal to a wide readership. There are detailed references at the end of each chapter and clinical material and vignettes which illustrate the diversity of problems met with in clinical practice.

The first chapter entitled "A Historical Perspective" traces the development of Child Psychiatry from the recognition that children needed help with Psychological problems as well as with physical illness, and the hope that early intervention might alleviate the prevalence of adult mental disturbance. Dr. Connell reminds us of the fact that exploitation and abuse of children was common until the 18th Century. During the 19th Century there was a growing recognition of childhood as a preparation for adult life. It was a Paediatrician, Charles West (1854) who first drew attention to the fact that children had their own characteristic psychological problems. In 1911 Beuler's work on Schizophrenia suggested that this disorder could develop in childhood and Freud's studies of disturbed adults pointed to early childhood traumas as the root of their difficulties.

During the 1930's methods of working with children were first developed. Attention was focussed on the individual child and attempts made to understand the meaning to the child of certain life events, the symptomatology presented, and its relationship to underlying conflicts. Dr. Connell refers to the work of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein as pioneers in the use of play as a means of communication and of working through conflicts.

Dr. Connell refers in her text to various studies which have attempted to research

the relationship between child and adult Psychiatric disorders. A Berkley study, McFarlane et. al., 1954, showed that many behaviour problems have two peaks of incidents, the pre-school period and adolescence— these appear to be periods of maximum stress for the developing personality. Follow-up studies of disturbed children into adult life suggests that emotional disorders and adaptionary reactions carry the best prognosis, conduct disorders less so and Psychosis the worst prognosis. Depressive illness apparently is being increasingly recognised in childhood and it seems likely that loss in childhood may be one precursor of depression in adult life. These studies Dr. Connell reflects are significant in their implication for the organisation of child psychiatric services and the Institution of Preventative Measures. Dr. Connell also refers to the research of Rutter (Isle of Wight study 1981) who found over the past two decades a trebling of delinquency rates in 14-17 year old British boys: a six fold increase in delinquency among girls: an increase in adolescent suicide: and an alarming increase in alcohol and drug abuse. These figures are alarming, not least because it was found that only one in ten children with Psychiatric disorders were under Specialist Psychiatric care. Dr. Connell refers to Australian studies reflecting similar increase in delinquency among girls.

Dr. Connell defines child Psychological problems as falling into three main groups: Developmental Disorders, Emotional & Conduct Disorders and Psychophysiological Disorders or Sematic Symptoms. These are dealt with under separate chapters and trace their Etiology, Symptomatology, Diagnosis and Management and Treatment. Other chapters cover the Epidemiology and Nosology of child Psychiatric disorders. Nosology— the classification of diseases is a useful section in which Dr. Connell has given clear indications for the use of DSM Classifications and should prove most helpful to Mental Health Workers who need to use such classifications for the purposes of research. Another section in the book covers the area of Clinical assessment and refers to the importance of comprehensive history taking giving helpful guidelines for structuring the interview and for collating material.

It has been difficult in this short review to do justice to Dr. Connell's text book. I think it will prove to be an invaluable text book for Practitioners and students in the

field of Child Psychiatry. It's importance lies in the fact that Dr. Connell places the child firmly within the context of the family and the environment and places equal stress on the child's internal and external worlds and the interaction of the two. This is illustrated most vividly in the case material. Dr. Connell has stressed the importance of a multidisciplinary team approach for the management and treatment of children and their families. She emphasises the necessity for good, clear, jargon-free communication between the Paediatric and Psychiatric team and I would include in this the General Practitioner as a member of this team. Dr. Connell has done much to promote good professional practice in this rewarding and enlightened book.

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FAMILY WORK IN ACTION: A HANDBOOK FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

Manor, Oded (ed)

Tavistock Publication, London 1984
Paperback, 179 pages.

This basic handbook is written in response to what was perceived by the authors to be a lack of "a simple practice-oriented text" for training purposes. The book is aimed at supervisors as a teaching tool to utilize in teaching social workers who have little formal family therapy training.

The aim of this handbook is first to overview systems theory as a conceptual framework. Secondly, to prepare social workers for work with families by making a transition to systemic thinking.

This book offers a practice-centred framework as a guide to understanding the process of intervention with a family. It thus offers a basic introduction to the process of engaging a family and addressing the problems presented from a systemic point of view. The systemic framework postulated in this book is as follows:—

The learning aims of the beginner working with families, it is suggested should be three-fold:

1. improvement in skills of observing non-verbal behaviour;
2. observing patterns of communication between people and sequences of behaviour;
3. identifying the positive value that