

It is rare to get the opportunity to be challenged and engaged on aspects of sleep that often are neglected but are clearly central to the way we understand how sleep and sleep disorders affect individuals, cultures and societies. For example, the current Western concepts of what is necessary for good sleep hygiene to encourage a monophasic sleep cycle, with the major sleep period at night, are compared with cultures where biphasic or polyphasic sleep are the norm, including the Japanese concept of *inemuri*, the Chinese custom of *wushui* and the more recent Western predilection for power naps. The medical anthropology and sociology of sleep are explored and provide an insight into cultural variations and thresholds of acceptability of what is considered

normal and abnormal sleep in children and the elderly. The influence of religions and literature on sleep and attitudes towards sleep provide some fascinating insights.

The editors and contributors are to be applauded and I would highly recommend this book to a broad 'target audience', ranging from those with a passing interest in sleep to those who manage sleep disorders on a daily basis.

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CONTENTS LIST INCLUDES*:

New from CPD Online

Genome-wide association studies: what a psychiatrist needs to know

Nick Craddock

Driving and dementia: a clinician's guide

Sarah Wilson & Gill Pinner

Refreshment: The mental state examination

Sarah Huline-Dickens

Adjustment disorder considered

Patricia Casey & Faraz Jabbar

Improve your management skills, improve your clinical service

Clare Oakley & Philip Sugarman

Teamwork: the art of being a leader and a team player

Josie Jenkinson, Clare Oakley & Fiona Mason

Crisis resolution and home treatment teams: an evolving model

Sonia Johnson

The psychodynamics of psychosis

Brian Martindale & Alison Summers

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Stephen Ginn

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