

## Book reviews

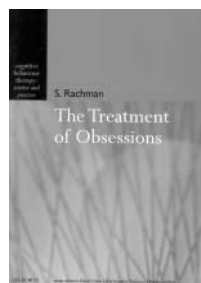
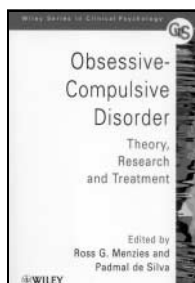
EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

### Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder. Theory, Research and Treatment

Edited by Ross G. Menzies & Padmal de Silva. Chichester: Wiley. 2003. 456 pp. £24.95 (pb). ISBN 0 471 49445 3

### The Treatment of Obsessions

By S. Rachman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003. 168 pp. £22.95 (pb). ISBN 0 19 851537 5



Why do some people get obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD) and not others? Why are people unable to part with worn out or useless possessions? Is body dysmorphic disorder the archetypal obsessive–compulsive spectrum disorder? How do you manage patients who only partially respond to selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors?

These are just some of the questions answered by over 20 authorities from both sides of the Atlantic in *Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder. Theory, Research and Treatment*, a succinct yet broad view of OCD. The scope of the book is wide, including chapters on the phenomenology of OCD, primary obsessional slowness and OCD in children and adolescents.

The chapter introducing a cognitive–behavioural model to explain compulsive hoarding is particularly impressive. The authors use the story of Dante's *Inferno* to illustrate this condition. Dante's hoarders are sent to the fourth level of hell, condemned to bash each other with their hoarded stones for eternity. The authors liken this to a recent event in Massachusetts, in which a number of people died because hoarded possessions caught fire and blocked escape routes.

Danger ideation reduction therapy (DIRT) is described as 'a viable alternative to standard interventions for compulsive washers'. It aims to eliminate patients' illness beliefs by reevaluating their perceptions of risk rather than engaging them in exposure and behavioural experiments. A randomised controlled trial of DIRT and exposure response prevention is currently underway.

Almost a third of the book is devoted to atypical presentations and subtypes of OCD. Treatment of obsessions, ruminations and covert compulsions is introduced, but I was left wanting to know more about practical interventions for successfully treating patients whose primary problem is obsessions.

Rachman's readable *The Treatment of Obsessions* proposes an 18-piece 'toolkit' for treating patients' obsessions, and also gives readers a theoretical basis for thinking about cognitive and behavioural treatment planning. He advocates encouraging patients to analyse their intrusive thoughts, their meaning and interpretation. Reducing misinterpretations, he argues, reduces obsessions. His six case vignettes give a vivid sense of the difficulties that therapists and patients face when tackling disabling obsessions. Although in the first vignette the patient responds well in just eight sessions, he describes other patients who only partially respond and he is pessimistic about the outcome for patients with a previous psychosis.

Psychiatrists should make space on their shelves for both these cogent texts. Although written independently they are remarkably compatible, *Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder* providing a sound introduction to OCD and *The Treatment of Obsessions* being an excellent practical guide.

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### Psychoanalytic Theories. Perspectives from Developmental Psychopathology

By Peter Fonagy & Mary Target. London: Whurr. 2002. 402 pp. £25.00 (pb). ISBN 1 86156 239 X



In 1998, Eric Kandel called for a rapprochement between psychoanalysis and the biological sciences, suggesting that this would provide a new intellectual basis for psychiatry and enrich both disciplines. His call has been resoundingly answered in this work by Fonagy & Target. They have summarised the theories of the most important British and American psychoanalytic thinkers over the past 100 years, providing the empirical evidence for the underlying model of development of each theory, drawing on the neurosciences and infant and child development research in particular to do so.

The coverage of psychoanalytic theories is brief, yet comprehensive, and theorists who have been too little acknowledged for their contribution, Joseph Sandler for example, are given due credit. The strengths and weaknesses of each theory are delineated in succinct fashion and without apparent bias – no mean feat in a field where views may be held with quasi-religious fervour, and workers within the field invariably have their own favourites.

Most importantly, theories that have suffered because some aspect of the theory has been regarded as disproven by research

findings are re-examined in the light of current knowledge. The example that stands out in my mind concerns the work of Margaret Mahler. Her concept of the phases of separation-individuation in infancy and early childhood has been useful both clinically and theoretically. However, her conceptualisation of the initial stage of infant life as commencing with a phase of 'normal autism' followed by a symbiotic period has been seen as incorrect, according to the findings of infant development researchers over the past 20 years. In an exploration drawing on findings from studies involving several fields of research, Fonagy & Target raise the possibility that Mahler's developmental framework may be appropriate to the truly psychological world of the human infant, an important possibility that must now face rigorous examination.

Fonagy & Target complete their tour of British and American psychoanalytic theories viewed from the perspective of developmental psychology and psychopathology with an account of Bowlby's attachment theory model, suitably updated by current attachment concepts and research, followed by accounts of systems theory models of development and, lastly, their own concept of 'mentalisation'. This refers to the process by which the concept of the self as a mental agent grows out of interpersonal experience with the primary caregivers.

The final chapter offers thoughts about future directions for psychoanalysis, enjoining workers in the clinical field to engage with researchers from the biological sciences to examine psychoanalytic theories using the rigorous means increasingly available.

I recommend this book both to students and to experienced practitioners in the fields of psychoanalysis, psychiatry and psychology. Anyone who desires a deeper understanding of the development of the human mind, its psychology and psychopathology, has much to gain from this work. It is of particular importance because psychoanalytic theory stands now at an exciting threshold. If its theorists join with biological researchers in ongoing exploration of the development of the mind, we can gain a truly integrated understanding of the mind and brain, surely the challenge of the 21st century.

**Kandel, E. (1998)** A new intellectual framework for psychiatry. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, **155**, 457–469.

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