

bias towards optimism persuasive, this theory can be over-stretched. For instance, she postulates that a bias towards optimism explains the current financial crisis, but I doubt whether such a bias is a sufficiently powerful explanation that all other theories can be disregarded.

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Oxford Specialist Handbooks in Psychiatry: Forensic Psychiatry

Nigel Eastman, Gwen Adshead, Simone Fox, Richard Latham & Seán Whyte
Oxford University Press, 2012, £44.99, pb, 712 pp.
ISBN: 9780199562824

On my first day as a junior doctor, trying frantically to remember if I learnt anything useful at medical school, I took four things to work with me: stethoscope, tourniquet, the *British National Formulary* and the *Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine*. All proved to be invaluable on a daily basis and it is for that reason that the Oxford Handbook has been an essential purchase for every medical student and junior doctor for many years. It was with mixed feelings that I opened a copy of the new *Oxford Specialist Handbook of Forensic Psychiatry*; same size and feel, with coloured ribbons to mark crucial pages, but would it live up to the iconic status of its well-established predecessor? Would it be a practical and useful, carry-with-you-everywhere guide to forensic psychiatry?

The book is divided into four main parts: clinical forensic psychiatry, the ethics of forensic psychiatry, law relevant to psychiatry and psychiatry within the legal system. In the first section the authors skilfully distil the aspects of clinical disorders that are particularly relevant for forensic psychiatrists. There are thoughtful discussions of common ethical dilemmas throughout the text but also in the specific ethics section. In the section on the law, the three UK jurisdictions are covered in addition to Ireland, with some reference to other legal systems around the world. In the final part, practical advice on court reports and giving evidence is clear and concise. The sum of these parts is an impressive summary of key knowledge required of forensic psychiatrists, written in an engaging and interesting style despite the limits of space.

This is a wonderful book and I was not disappointed. I wish it had been available when I started my training in forensic psychiatry but I will use it frequently in the future.

Every forensic psychiatry trainee (and many others besides) should own a copy.

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Drugs – Without the Hot Air: Minimising the Harms of Legal and Illegal Drugs

David Nutt
UIT Cambridge, 2012, £12.99, pb, 368 pp.
ISBN: 9781906860165

This is a book aimed at the general public. Reviewing a book on drugs as an addiction specialist had the prospect of being an unrewarding experience. Simplistic, reductionist arguments presented in a journalistic style leaving you angry and despondent. However, having David Nutt as the author offered the prospect of something different and as the title suggests, 'without the hot air'.

Did the book work for me and would I recommend it to you? In part it worked (even though I am not the target audience) and yes, I would recommend it, because it is full of sound referenced evidence along with key data, vignettes and anecdotes that make it a pleasure to read. For an addiction psychiatrist, parts of the book giving background understanding to subjects (e.g. 'Why do people take drugs?') can be skim read, along with other chapters for the non-specialist psychiatrist (e.g. 'Prescription drugs').

For me, the real strength of this book is in the sharing of the author's depth of knowledge in the science and political history of the subject, along with his clinical perspective and a passionate desire to reduce the harm caused by all substances including alcohol and tobacco.

The longest chapter, 'The war on drugs, and the drugs in war', offers cogent arguments that the continuing status quo is just not good enough, but Nutt does not stop there. He offers alternatives for the future, and with the prospect of a wide readership, and people informing themselves of the issues, our children (including those in producer nations) will live in a more informed and less hazardous future.

Finally, as only a scientist in psychopharmacology research could do, David Nutt offers his vision of 'The future of drugs': a DNA-sequenced society choosing selectively to use substances to enhance performance and treat disease. If we make the right choices!

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