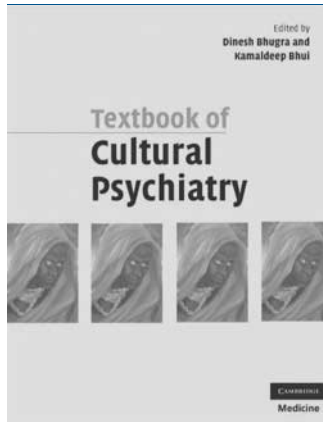


## Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode  
and Rosalind Ramsay



### Textbook of Cultural Psychiatry

By Dinesh Bhugra  
& Kamaldeep Bhui.  
Cambridge University Press.  
2007. £75.00 (hb). 612pp.  
ISBN 9780521856539

Globalisation, that worldwide phenomenon through which national boundaries are breaking down, has, paradoxically, sharpened the realities of cultural differences and similarities rather than blurred them. We are living in a world where the average clinician can no longer afford to be concerned only with the subcultures within their own culture but must learn to deal with patients from distinctly different cultural backgrounds. The study of cultural psychiatry has consequently taken on a new lease of life in recent years. Among the protagonists of this renewed focus must be counted the editors of this textbook. Editing two books of cultural psychiatry within the same year can be a task reserved only for the gurus. That they have managed to ensure that the *Textbook of Cultural Psychiatry* is complementary to, rather than being a rehash of, their other volume, *Culture and Mental Health: A Comprehensive Textbook*, attests to the depth of their authority in the field.

Organised into six parts, the *Textbook of Cultural Psychiatry* is an authoritative source of information for students, teachers, mental health practitioners and researchers. The part dealing with aspects of management is, for me, one of the major achievements of this volume. Students, as well as teachers, should find the chapters on psychopharmacology and psychotherapy across cultures very illuminating indeed. The chapter on spiritual aspects of management is perhaps emblematic of the general approach in this book: practical and yet not prescriptive; informative, not dogmatic. Contemporary issues are given a fresh and informed look. For example, the chapter on affective disorders addresses the challenge of how to interpret the starkly divergent rates of mental illness found in community surveys, the reports of which have been emerging at an increasing frequency in recent years. Almost inevitably, the reported better outcome of schizophrenia in low- and middle-income countries, an issue of continuing debate, also receives attention in the chapter on schizophrenia and related psychoses even though, I think, insufficient attention is paid to the opposing views and data. The chapters dealing with racism, migration and mass displacement, issues of considerable importance to psychiatry and mental health, add to the overall appeal of this book.

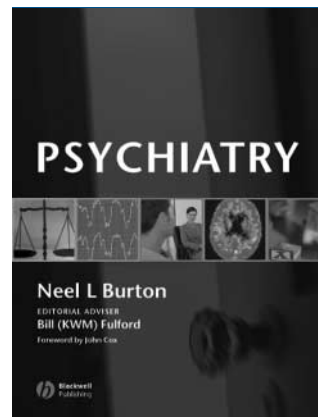
Even though glimpses of what Kirmayer, in the first chapter of the book, refers to as 'a persistent legacy of colonialism . . . that can be seen in the continuing romance with exoticism' are still visible in some chapters, most have managed not to treat culture as an ethnic phenomenon, viewed as exotic and mythical, but as

something that pervades the lives of everyone, the clinician as well as the patients seeking care. Still, other chapters show the ambiguity and lack of precision that have characterised cultural psychiatry: such as the interchangeable use of 'developing', 'Third World', and 'non-Western' countries.

Overall, this textbook is destined to become a vital resource for anyone interested in how culture shapes our mental life, in health and in disease.

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### Psychiatry

By Neel L. Burton.  
Blackwell Publishing. 2006.  
192pp. £22.99 (pb).  
ISBN 1405136529

Attracting medical students to a career in psychiatry has been a challenge for some time. There is a dearth of good undergraduate textbooks for psychiatry, with the currently recommended books providing more detailed information than required. This book aims to fill the gap by covering the essential knowledge students need during their placement in psychiatry.

It opens with a brief history of psychiatry, followed by a chapter on patient assessment. Other topics covered include delivery of mental healthcare, schizophrenia and psychotic disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, suicide and self-harm, personality disorders, organic disorders, intellectual disabilities, substance misuse, child and adolescent psychiatry and eating disorders.

All the chapters begin with learning objectives clearly spelt out, have a concise summary highlighting the important learning points and conclude with self-assessment questions. One of the main highlights of this book is that the author has included references to art, cinema and literature. This sets it apart from the standard textbooks in psychiatry and medicine. The author has an interesting story to tell or point to make related to each subject covered, which makes for a very engaging and readable book.

The chapter on patient assessment provides a comprehensive account of assessment in psychiatry, including important aspects of history-taking, mental state examination, investigations and formulation. The important aspects of assessment are exemplified using a case study, which would be very useful for a student facing their first assessment. However, it is distracting to see series of lists rather than running text in this chapter.

The chapter on delivery of mental healthcare is a coherent account of psychiatric service provision in the UK and the list

of societies and support groups outside the mainstay services will prove useful. The chapters on schizophrenia and mood disorders are presented in the standard format of epidemiology, aetiology, clinical features, diagnosis, management and prognosis but the lack of emphasis on psychological and social treatments is disappointing: the author dedicates three pages to the pharmacological management of schizophrenia, and a paragraph for psychosocial treatments.

Although the later chapters covering, among other things, anxiety disorders and personality disorders provide adequate information, they appear at times to be too brief and not as thorough as previous ones. Perhaps this reflects the relative importance allocated to these topics during medical students' placement in psychiatry, but a book purporting to be a general textbook should, ideally, provide consistent and balanced coverage of all subjects.

The author has clearly aimed this book at medical students, and this focus has been adhered to for the most part. The lack of clinical exam focus (i.e. OSCEs) may deter some exam-focused medical students. The lack of information on psychosocial aspects of management is an area for improvement in future editions. Overall, the difficult task of distilling a vast amount of information to provide a concise yet coherent and, more importantly, interesting account of psychiatry relevant to medical students seems to have been achieved in large part, and I would not hesitate to recommend it.

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