

context of the psychodynamic and cognitive frameworks in which they belong.

Overall, the authors have made a brave, if doomed, attempt at achieving the irreconcilable aims of preserving the character of a book which is the product of its (now quite distant) time while also writing something of practical use for today's psychiatrists.

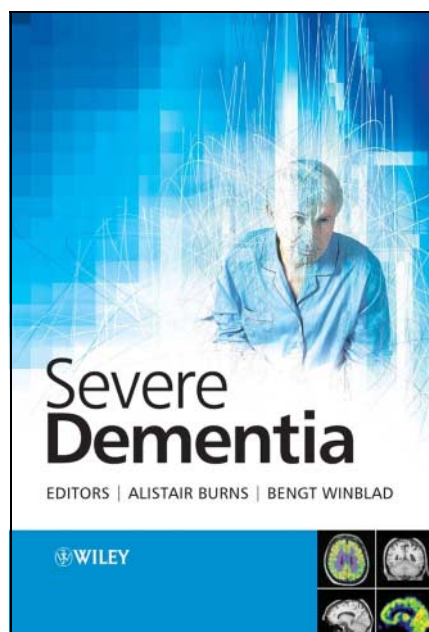
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Severe Dementia

Edited by Alistair Burns & Bengt Winblad.
John Wiley & Sons. 2006. 269pp. £75.00 (hb).
ISBN 0470010541

In their introduction, the editors point out that much research and clinical attention is being directed at early diagnosis and treatment of the mild and moderate stages of the disease and, as a consequence, severe dementia is a relatively neglected area. A motivating factor behind this book was to redress this imbalance and bring together the key issues and current knowledge of severe dementia. The contributions of experts from a variety of backgrounds have succeeded in this.

The early chapters of the book cover assessment, diagnosis, brain chemistry and molecular pathology. These chapters are not entirely specific to severe dementia, but do give an up-to-date account of



current knowledge. Similarly, the section on clinical features includes material relevant to the earlier stages of the illness, but the chapters on staging and function in severe dementia include considerable detail and are rich with information.

The final section covers the management of severe dementia and includes chapters on drug treatments, non-pharmacological interventions, palliative care and health economics. Those on drug treatments highlight the relative dearth of robust research in severe dementia, but the topics are comprehensively covered. Drug treatments for behavioural and psychological symptoms are well covered and are followed by a general overview of non-pharmacological treatments and then an interesting chapter detailing the behavioural and environmental interventions of the Seattle protocols. There follows a short chapter on 'Care by families' – research in this area is relatively scant but what there is, and the issues brought to the fore by the authors, are very pertinent. The remainder of the book is very much specific to severe dementia, with thought-provoking chapters on person-centred care, end-of-life issues and narrative ethics. The final chapter on health economics reminds the reader that the severe stages of dementia are the most costly, yet little is known about resource use and cost-effectiveness of interventions for the late-stage illness.

In summary, this is an excellent book that truly brings some focus back onto the nature of, and issues associated with, severe dementia. It will be a valuable resource for specialist clinicians and those directly providing care to people with severe dementia, such as general practitioners and staff of nursing homes.

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Binge Britain: Alcohol and the National Response

By Martin Plant & Moira Plant.
Oxford University Press. 2006. 208pp.
£19.95 (pb). ISBN 0199299412

As the title announces, this book concerns itself largely with the pattern of drinking in Britain, past and present, and seeks to



comment on the government response to problematic alcohol use in terms of policy-making, legislation and its enforcement. Its publication is timely, in so far as it follows the 2004 National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy for England, which outlines interventions to prevent, minimise and manage alcohol-related harm.

In 2005 the Alcohol Needs Assessment Research Project found that 23% of the population aged 16 to 64 drink hazardously or harmfully (7.1 million in England) and a further 1.1 million are dependent. Furthermore, 21% of men and 9% of women are binge drinkers. Alcohol problems are estimated to cost the taxpayer more than £20 billion per annum, and alcohol is implicated in 30 000 hospital admissions, 70% of accident and emergency attendances and 22 000 premature deaths.

Binge Britain is certainly a readable book. It provides an informative historical overview that examines factors influencing alcohol use and the social consequences of alcohol consumption. It explores the role of public attitude and influence of the alcohol industry in contributing to and maintaining the current binge style of drinking in Britain. The book also highlights the growing concerns regarding the escalating use of alcohol among British women.

Overall, I found it a useful source of historical and social information. I was disappointed that the potential physical and psychological consequences of excess alcohol consumption are not explored in more detail. I also felt that with the authors'