



Bulimics on Bulimia

Edited by Maria Stavrou
Jessica Kingsley Publishers,
2008, £12.99 pb, 160 pp.
ISBN 978-1-84310-668-5

Bulimics on Bulimia aims to fill a gap in the publications on the disorder which is largely considered retrospectively while the writers are in recovery. In order to rectify this, Maria Stavrou brings together 19 personal accounts by people from very different backgrounds, professions and age groups. With at times painful honesty, the authors challenge the stereotypical image of the bulimic teenage girl, dispel myths about bingeing and purging, and reveal that this secretive eating disorder affects a far wider range of people than commonly assumed. By allowing the reader a glimpse into their daily struggle of living with bulimia, the complexity of the disorder and the inherent contradictions are rendered evident – the emotional void which only food seems to be able to fill, and an underlying need for perfectionism and control, compromised by feelings of helplessness, guilt and shame.

An overwhelming sense of sadness accompanies these brave accounts as the authors reveal that, despite the wish to change, the perceived need to hold on to their eating disorder as a coping mechanism is far stronger. The readers will find themselves relating to each person as varied as they are, and the only regret will be that they have not been given a voice beyond the limited scope of their respective accounts, as the wish to know more about them arises.

This book will strike a chord with anyone suffering from bulimia and provide support in showing that they are not alone in their struggle and in attempting to break the silence surrounding this illness. Often seen as the 'lesser' disorder to anorexia, these personal accounts should at last make clear that it is no less serious and debilitating. It is equally recommended to friends and families of anyone who is suffering from an eating disorder, as well as mental health professionals and counsellors for its sincere and intimate insight without ever losing its factual approach, setting it apart from a large number of personal accounts of living with an eating disorder.

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Get Through Workplace Based Assessments in Psychiatry (2nd edn)

Sree Prathap Mohana Murthy
Royal Society of Medicine Press,
2008, £24.95 pb, 189pp.
ISBN 978-1-85315-896-4

The introduction of workplace-based assessments (WPBA) in postgraduate medical education represents a significant shift in the culture of assessing trainees. Trainees are keen to obtain clear and detailed information about how to undertake WPBA and what is expected of them. There is also an unfortunate sense of having to 'pass' the required WPBA that means they gain the flavour of an examination, whereas the true value of WPBA lies in their ability to identify areas for improvement and support feedback that results in the development of an appropriate learning plan.

It is little surprise that a book has been written about surviving WPBA. In a similar way to MRCPsych examination books, this book may be used by trainees to reduce anxiety and uncertainty. However, such associations with examinations are actually the book's downfall. Indeed, it is admitted in the preface that it was originally written for preparing for the long case and this is clearly evident from the text. The tasks for mini-ACEs are akin to the observed interview tasks of the old Part 2 examination. The advice on using the specific WPBA tools can be found in more detail in guidance on the College website (www.rcpsych.ac.uk/Docs/BriefguidecurrpsychAug08%20%5B2%5D.doc). The book lacks discussion of important practical issues such as ensuring different WPBA tools are used to assess a range of clinical situations and skills or integrating the assessments into an individual learning plan.

I fear this book does not offer enough answers to the questions that trainees have about WPBA. However, as an *aide-memoire* for clinical assessment and management it is a good resource. I would have found it useful when I was preparing for the now departed long case examination. It succeeds in dealing with the acquisition of basic psychiatric skills, and essentially these skills are what are required for successful completion of WPBA. Unfortunately, it is disappointing in addressing the unique and important challenges of undertaking WPBA on the ground.

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Emergencies in Psychiatry

Basant Puri & Ian Treasaden
Oxford University Press, 2008,
£21.95 pb, 256 pp.
ISBN 978-0-19-853080-0

Suicide Prevention

Robert D. Goldney
Oxford University Press, 2008,
£5.99 pb, 120 pp.
ISBN 978-0-19-953325-1

Emergencies in Psychiatry is a pocket-sized handbook and as such faces pivotal choices and challenges peculiar to such publications. What constitutes an emergency? How might they be prioritised? What level of detail is possible and appropriate? How can often complex fields be summarised to allow them to be readily accessible to a trainee?

Emergencies in Psychiatry copes unevenly with these demands. Its strength lies in its specification of up-to-date professional guidelines and recommendations. Although its treatment of topics is generally succinct, it leans towards too lengthy listings of causes for it to be of practical bedside help to the trainee. This is reminiscent of medical textbook lists where the most obscure cause is remembered (a personal favourite being scorpion bites as a cause of pancreatitis). I found the range of emergencies covered surprising, with homelessness and domestic abuse alongside traditional concerns such as the 'aggressive patient'.

The book attempts to cover all aspects and specialties within psychiatry and is over-inclusive for a pocket-sized text. A greater selectivity in its coverage alongside its capacity for succinct communication might have enabled it to successfully compete for a place in a trainee's back pocket.

In contrast, *Suicide Prevention* is more surefooted in negotiating the challenges of a short text. Its planning and sequencing of topics are well conceived and all relevant aspects of suicide, including history, epidemiology, assessment and management are included. These build towards the chapter on suicide prevention. I particularly liked the chapter dealing with bereavement after suicide which does not always get the attention it deserves. The presentation is well structured and the use of summary boxes is effective. It reads well throughout. This book will be useful for psychiatric trainees and perhaps medical students with an interest in the topic. As might be expected with such a short text, senior psychiatrists and those in other disciplines with a mature understanding of the field are unlikely to find anything new.

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