

Video news

Buying or hiring video tapes for psychiatric teaching can be risky. Too often they are laboured and over-long with no real flair. And since you can't thumb through tapes in handy shops, it's easy to end up with a pig in a poke if you buy unseen.

'Video News' aims to keep you better informed about tapes. The column will appear three times a year, and will consist of an initial Video News update of odds and ends; a review of key tapes covering a major psychiatric topic; and a number of single reviews.

Since this is a new venture, comments and views will be welcomed, and these may well be included in the column if of general interest.

'Best buy' tape guide for tutors: The newly reconstituted College Audio Visual Group is currently compiling a 'best buy' tape guide for psychiatric tutors. We hope to be able to recommend a core-list of perhaps 20 to 30 tapes covering the whole psychiatric field, giving details of each. If you have favourite tapes you think should be included, please let me know. There will be a prize of a really useful tape for the most helpful and informative suggestions! We hope to publish the list early next year.

Membership of the College's Audio Visual Group: If you would like to contribute to the group in any way, please contact either myself or Lynette Napper via the College. Current activities are limited to compiling the 'best buy' guide, keeping abreast of new tapes, and developing 'video news'. If you think we should be doing more, come and help us: we meet over lunch during College quarterly meetings.

Spring '89 edition of 'Video Tapes for Psychiatric Teaching' published by the College: This is an extensive list of most commercially available tapes, and includes reprints of reviews published in the *Bulletin* for some of the tapes. Tom Pilkington compiled this list before retiring earlier this year from his active time as convener of the Audio Visual Group. Free copies are available from Lynette Napper at the College. The list is invaluable for tutors wanting to know the range of tapes available.

Readers contributions to 'Video News': If you would like information included in this column, wish to state a point of view, or would like to review tapes yourself, then please let me know via the College.

NICHOLAS ROSE

Tape reviews

Schizophrenia

In recent years several attempts have been made to enhance public awareness of schizophrenia and its clinical management. Among these have been a series of videotapes, some of which have been shown on national television. *Beyond the Hospital* is based on the Channel Four production that explores the lives of a group of patients receiving care in the Bristol area. A compelling view is provided of the experience of coping with schizophrenia, including the difficulties encountered in negotiating the medical and social services.

This is achieved largely by discussion between a group of four exceptionally articulate patients, with an interviewer, their families, and most effective of all in a group discussion among themselves. Three of these patients appear to have been exceedingly well managed and provide a hopeful picture of what can be achieved with modern therapeutic interventions. Although it is clear that psychosocial treatment has contributed extensively to their recovery process, the significance of drug therapy is somewhat overvalued. The fourth member of the group, a creative artist, questions the value of medication, and although appearing somewhat more symptomatic, nonetheless produces a vivid canvas in his back garden to show his social worker, and offers an alternative to the life sentence of neuroleptic drugs. It is apparent that even in this excellent service many decisions about the patients medical and social management have been made with their minimal involvement. The notion that family living is bad for schizophrenia is similarly perpetuated, despite evidence that the alternatives in the area are grossly inadequate and may provoke even more stress.

Greater emphasis on a holistic approach to schizophrenia is provided by Dr Patricia Potter, a consultant psychiatrist from Belfast, in a homely interview with Professor Malcolm Brown in *Talking about Schizophrenia and its Impact on Family Life*. Here is a dedicated clinician discussing schizophrenia and its management. Social skills training, family management and the value of understanding the patients' own experiences are all emphasised. Unfortunately, excessive technical language makes this video less accessible to non specialist audiences.

The least effective method of presenting material on schizophrenia appears to be the use of celebrities. Jimmy Savile, Richard Baker and Anthony Clare are

all upstaged by an Oxford graduate, who provides an exceptional account of the experience of schizophrenia, and its management: In *Schizophrenia – What does it mean?* he provides a particularly moving critique of the way public fears are fuelled by media dramatisation of schizophrenia sufferers as mad axemen. The attempt to compare the unseen disabilities of schizophrenia to those readily observed in paraplegia is an interesting one, which may have succeeded had the producer allowed a series of patients to describe their experiences of schizophrenic phenomena without the assistance of a selection of visually distorted landscapes and loud music that almost totally obscured the excellent descriptions. An earlier audiotape presentation by the same group, entitled *Living with Schizophrenia*, is much more effective in its simplicity, and I would recommend that every mental health professional obtain a copy of this, for personal education and for use as an aid to education of patients and caregivers.

All these presentations show positive glimpses of schizophrenia. Not all the sufferers are as positive as the young man from Bristol who announces that he is proud to have had schizophrenia, but they support the view that people who suffer from schizophrenia are normal people who have had an abnormal experience.

IAN FALLOON

Effective communication with the relatives of patients suffering from schizophrenia is not only humanitarian, but also improves the outcome of the illness. Relatives often feel badly informed about many aspects of schizophrenia. Working with relatives and giving them appropriate information at the right time is likely to help them cope with the illness better, and form a more co-operative relationship with staff treating the illness.

Schizophrenia: Talking to the Relatives illustrates some of the problems commonly encountered by the staff (doctors, nurses, social workers and other members of the team) who have contact with the families of patients with schizophrenia. A middle-aged couple become seriously worried about their son's strange and difficult behaviour. He is diagnosed as a schizophrenic. Interviews are role-played between the parents and psychiatrist, and then a psychiatric social worker. The tape demonstrates techniques designed to facilitate communication. The first part shows how to give basic information about schizophrenia at the time of initial diagnosis. The second part shows the social worker dealing with problems arising later on in the illness. The emphasis throughout is on allowing relatives to express their own feelings and worries and giving them the

right information for their particular experiences. Accompanying notes amplify the points made on the tape.

Schneider's first rank symptoms remain, for the present at least, reliable, convenient and readily teachable diagnostic criteria for schizophrenia across a variety of cultures.

In *The Diagnosis of Schizophrenia* Professor David Goldberg clearly demonstrates each of these first rank symptoms in patients. These examples, together with the careful use of questioning to elicit them, provide a vivid learning experience, which is especially valuable in relation to the less common phenomena. By providing a readily accessible 'bank' of symptoms, it also overcomes that natural law which results in suitable patients vanishing in proportion to the teacher's case of need. A good tape both for library reference, and to stimulate seminar discussion.

BIJEN SEKHAWAT

Art therapy

The unique value of *Art Therapy and Psychiatry* is that it introduces psychiatrists to an area of the subject with which otherwise they might have little or no contact. The tape is professionally made and visually attractive. The discussion which accompanies the tape is well balanced and informative. The therapeutic potential of art therapy is explored by a multidisciplinary team discussion.

The tape is 45 minutes long. This is excessive and it would have benefited from tighter editing and would hold an audience's attention much better if it had been no longer than half an hour. It is still a valuable tape and could provide an excellent basis for a seminar discussion.

JOHN COBB

Relaxation

This cassette audiotape entitled *Relaxation: a private consultation with Dr Vernon Coleman* promises to be "a step by step guide to physical and mental relaxation" from "Britain's leading medical author". Good. Just what is needed in the field of self-help: a sound, systematic training tape in the technique of relaxation – a valid instruction tape to compete with those dreary, soporific, tapes which invite one to "focus on the temple of your being" but to do very little else.

Already feeling quite relaxed, I settled down to listen to side one – the useful introduction to the effects of stress. Step by step, my anxiety rose. I learnt that "our minds are killing us", that I was vulnerable to dangerously high blood pressure, risked a CVA or

even cancer, unless I did something about my stress now. After listening to that I did feel stressed.

After 20 minutes of induced *angst*, I needed to switch to side two – the exercise itself. Like Dr Coleman, I believed that therapeutic relaxation is not achieved by slumping down in front of the television, but that it is a skill which has to be rehearsed and practised until it comes naturally and quickly in response to stress. We seemed to be back on the same wave length.

The instructions for relaxing were essentially those devised by Jacobsen in the 1930s. The individual is required systematically to tense and relax muscle groups in the body. It is a sound procedure, but one which any therapist could record for a client; in fact the routine is probably more effective if recorded using the voice of a known therapist which is already associated with relief from anxieties. Instructions for the Jacobsen exercise can be found in his book *Progressive Relaxation* (1938), although most therapists consider them to be rather lengthy and might prefer to use one of the scripts for making relaxation tapes found in *Stress Management* (1987) by Charlesworth & Nathan, or in *Managing Anxiety* (in press: OUP) by myself.

I found that the recording made by Dr Coleman was not as soothing as it might have been, as he does not have the dull, monotonal drawl which can be so hypnotic. I feel that there are many other similar tapes on the market which I would find more relaxing. Lists of such tapes can be obtained from organisations such as Relaxation for Living (29 Burwood Park, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey) or Stresswatch (PO Box 4AR, London W14 4AR).

A final comment about this tape is that I would not really consider it a relaxation training tape, in so far as the user is presented with a thorough relaxation exercise but is not well instructed in applying the skill to the daily situations where anxiety arises. In order for people to learn the necessary applied skill, they need to be introduced to progressively shorter exercises until they can relax at will, in response to tension. Both the Charlesworth and Nathan, and my own book, contain instructions for doing this, while very few commercial tapes do so.

On the practical side, Dr Vernon gives useful hints and instructions about preparing for the exercise, getting a good breathing pattern established and using a calming visual image to enhance the process. However, for my £6.99 I would have preferred something less alarming and more original, with explicit instructions of how to use this skill in my everyday life.

HELEN KENNERLEY

Tape details

ratings

- *** highly recommended
- ** recommended
- * worth looking at

audience

- P – psychiatrists
- M – multi-disciplinary
- UG – undergraduates
- PG – postgraduates

Beyond the Hospital

Production: Dr P. Barham & G. Griffiths for Dialogue Four Projects
 Distributor: Pavilion Publishing (Brighton) Ltd. (sale), Freepost (BR 458), 89 Havelock Road, Brighton BN1 1ZY
 Details: video; 125 mins; 1988. £195.00 plus post & VAT
 Rating/audience: *, M, UG and PG

Talking about Schizophrenia and its Impact on Family Life

Production: Professor M. Brown
 Distributor: Concord (sale/hire) 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9BJ
 Details: video; 50 mins; 1986. £50.00
 Rating/audience: **, M, UG and PG

Schizophrenia – what does it mean?

Production: Northumberland Area Health Authority
 Distributor: Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic Products (sale), Library, Ellison Building, Ellison Place, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 8ST
 Details: video; 35 mins; 1987. £55.00
 Rating/audience: *, M, UG and PG

Living with Schizophrenia

Production: R. Byer & J. Ferris, Northumberland Area Health Authority
 Distributor: Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic Products (see above)
 Details: Audio cassettes (set of 4); 120 mins; 1986. £25.00
 Rating/audience: **, M, UG and PG

Schizophrenia: Talking to relatives

Production: Dr G. McGrath & Professor D. Goldberg, University Hospital, South Manchester
 Distributor: Routledge (sale), 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
 Details: video; 35 mins; 1986. £97.75
 Rating/audience: **, M, UG and PG

The Diagnosis of Schizophrenia

Production: Professor D. Goldberg, University Hospital, South Manchester
 Distributor: University of Manchester, Department of Psychiatry, University Hospital, West Didsbury, Manchester M20 8LR
 Details: video; 30 mins; £25.00 (send blank cassette with order)
 Rating/audience: **, P, UG and PG

Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7JZ
 Details: video; 45 mins; 1988. £47.00 plus post & VAT
 Rating/audience: **, M, UG and PG

Art Therapy and Psychiatry

Production: Dr N. Minton
 Distributor: University of London, Audio-Visual Centre, Northwing Studios,

Relaxation: A private consultation with Dr Vernon Coleman
 Production: Dr Vernon Coleman
 Distributor: Private Consultations, Preston House, Kentisbury, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 4NH
 Details: Audio cassette; 40 mins; 1988. £6.99
 Rating/audience: *, M, UG and PG

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Psychiatry and the media

'Media for Mental Health'

ROSALIND RAMSAY, Registrar in Psychiatry, St Luke's Woodside Hospital, London N10

'Media for Mental Health' is a successful educational project launched three years ago by the Mental Health Film Council (MHFC) with the aim of promoting greater general understanding of mental well-being. During this time psychiatrists have seen growing public discussion about issues of mental health, in part perhaps a reflection of the continuing shift of psychiatric care into the community.

'Media for Mental Health' has played an important role in stimulating use of the media to try and foster increasing public and professional awareness of mental health. Project Director Peter Evans describes his work as tackling the apparent stigma attached to mental health by providing 'a climate allowing for more thought and talk about our mental well-being – whoever we may be'. He maintains that the media, particularly broadcast media can help create such a climate. With the backing of its parent organisation the MHFC, the Project got involved in giving advice on television productions, first a

Channel 4 season of programmes ('Mind's Eye') and then a BBC 1 series ('You in Mind'). One particular difficulty Evans recognised is that although broadcast programmes may extensively investigate a subject, the same level of interest is rarely maintained over time. In an attempt to overcome this problem the Project started to take on longer term work, and by using contacts generated through the initial television work, is evolving as an important outreach and development arm of the MHFC. The Film Council has available information on over 600 videos looking at various aspects of health. Evans and his team have begun work with local groups in setting up a series of 'Media for Mental Health Events', planned as opportunities for all kinds of people to come together to view and discuss video material covering a wide range of mental health themes. This summer Peter Evans was awarded the John Robinson Award in recognition of the importance of his pioneering work.