



BOOK REVIEWS

Neuroscience of Psychoactive Substance Use and Dependence

Pp.xx + 264. Sw.fr.50/US\$45. WHO. 2004. ISBN 92-4-156235-8. (Available from SAMA-HMPG. Price R350, members R335).

There has been an enormous growth in our understanding of substance abuse and addiction over recent years. This book describes the current knowledge of the neuroscience of this interesting and clinically important topic. Various aspects are covered, including the neuroanatomy, neurochemistry, behavioural theories, pharmacology of different substances of abuse, our current understanding of the genetic contribution to addiction, the link with co-morbid mental illness, ethical issues and implications of current research in this field on public health policy.

The book is written in an easy to read and easy to understand manner and it has many useful illustrations to supplement the text. The content is comprehensive and up to date. There is a useful summary at the end of each chapter and the basic background to each topic is discussed in an uncomplicated manner before more complicated details are explained.

This book focuses on the research findings of the neuroscience of drug abuse and dependence and does not cover practical clinical management issues or treatment research.

This is an outstanding publication, with a very useful text for workers and researchers in the field of substance abuse and dependence, especially psychiatrists, psychologists or trainees in these fields. The general practitioner or lay person with a special interest in this field may also find it useful and interesting. I can recommend it to all interested in this growing and important topic.

Lize Weich

Principles of Medicine in Africa

3rd Edition. Edited by Eldryd Parry, Richard Godfrey, David Mabey and Geoffrey Gill. Pp. xx + 1442. Illustrated. £120. Cambridge University Press. 2004. ISBN 0-521-80616-X (Available from SAMA-HMPG. Price R600, members R540.)

When I first arrived as a trainee, newly graduated from Cape Town, in a general practice in Aberdeenshire, Scotland my trainer kept, rather patronisingly, asking if I had heard of particular medical problems. The implication was that somehow medical training in Africa would be different from

that provided in the UK. Which of course it was. We saw more pathology as students than my erstwhile trainer had probably seen during the course of his career in general practice in a comfortable middle-class area in Scotland. However, as a student, I never had access to a book with the scope of *Principles of Medicine in Africa* – a book that recognises that although the basics are the same, medical practice in Africa is subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, different from the practice of internal medicine elsewhere in the world.

Africa is the world's poorest continent, and the only one where people are becoming progressively poorer and consequently sicker. The reasons for this are many and this book not only offers excellent and comprehensive information on the aetiology, pathology, presentation and treatment of those diseases and conditions common in Africa, but also seeks to address some of the issues surrounding the delivery of health care in resource-poor areas. Instead of diving into infectious diseases, as is traditional in text books of medicine, the book starts with a full section on health and disease, examining some of the reasons for the lack of health so apparent across the continent. The increasing movement of people through war and disasters has led to particular medical challenges, which are addressed well in a section covering refugees and disasters. The opening section ends with a comprehensive look at managing a health service and, importantly, managing and financing a drug supply.

Unlike most text books of medicine, this one does not confine itself to adult medicine, but includes sections on managing childhood illness, a recognition of the demographics of most of Africa and the role that disease has in shaping populations through childhood morbidity and mortality. This includes the IMCI guidelines for managing primary level health facilities and should be of value not only to doctors, but also to the nurse practitioners who provide health care in so much of the continent.

Although fully half of the volume deals with infectious diseases, emphasising those of particular importance in the continent such as HIV and tuberculosis, the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases is not ignored. This section 'aims to provide a framework for considering the current and future of chronic disease patterns in Africa, and a description of those patterns'. It also includes mental health disorders, increasingly common and hugely debilitating in a region with so few resources for their care.

This important book will be invaluable to those working in Africa and if a hospital or clinic has only this as its reference work, their patients should have no concerns that their health care providers are underinformed.

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