



columns

I thought it unfortunate that the differential diagnoses followed the hierarchical ordering of ICD-10 with organic causes being listed first. While in some respects this is logical in other ways it is not so. The reason relates to the old adage that "if I see a bird flying past my window it is more likely to be a sparrow than a canary". clearly in terms of organic disorders, hypothalamic tumour is a possible differential diagnosis for mania. However, substance misuse is much more common as a cause of manic symptomatology. There was also one 'howler': phaeochromocytomatosis is given as the first differential diagnosis of panic symptoms, even before thyrotoxicosis! Examiners would not be impressed by such ordering.

In spite of these reservations, used in conjunction with other teaching methods and in short segments, the videos provide a good adjunct to the teaching of basic psychiatry.

**Anne Farmer**, Professor of Psychiatric Nosology, Social, Genetic & Developmental Psychiatric Research Centre, Institute of Psychiatry, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF

### The Treatment of Drinking Problems. A Guide for the Helping Professionals

G. Edwards, E. J. Marshall and C. C. H. Cook. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press. 1997. 368 pp. £23.95. ISBN 0-521-49792-0

When I was introduced to the first edition of this book I was enthralled. Here was a bestseller of the addictions world which combined good readable English with evidence-based medicine and sound clinical judgement. When I came to read this third edition I assumed it would be as good, so I took it on holiday, something clinicians are warned against, but the risk was worth it and I was not disappointed.

For this new edition the first author has been joined by two others. This enhances the book by giving it a broader creative base from two well-respected figures. The volume is divided into two parts, the first of which covers basic areas which give a background understanding of alcohol problems, while the second part gives a thoroughly practical account of clinical relevance to screening, assessment and treatment. There is an introductory guide which sets forth the aims of the authors and would allow easy access by a reader to those areas of immediate interest at any time when dipping into the book.

As might be expected, where statements are made, references are quoted to back up the opinions expressed. This means it can function as a very useful starting point for pursuing an area of interest. Appropriate references are quoted from the past (with Trotter, 1804, being the oldest I could see) while incorporating up to date literature as well.

Unfortunately, Project MATCH was published just too late to be included though there is information on the use of new drugs such as acamprosate and naltrexone.

I am probably being too critical to cavil that a section is included on "transient hallucinatory experience" without anything other than opinion to back it up. There is no discussion in relationship to DSM-IV or ICD-10 about this suggestion. Similarly, a statement is made that alcoholic hepatitis "almost always progresses to cirrhosis in women, even following abstinence". That has not been my invariable experience and I would have liked a reference to support this. However, to find only two criticisms compared with such a luxurious wealth of fact, common sense and treatment optimism – while being a good read into the bargain makes me feel churlish. All psychiatrists who treat patients with alcohol problems should obtain a copy and they will find that it will repay itself as a reference book. Libraries in psychiatric hospitals must have at least one copy for those preparing for examinations.

**A. D. T. Robinson**, Consultant Psychiatrist, Substance Misuse Service, Fulton Clinic, Royal Cornhill Hospital, 26 Cornhill Road, Aberdeen AB25 2ZH

## miscellany

FOCUS, the child and adolescent mental health project at the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit, has produced an internet guide for child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) professionals. This resource contains two sections: the first is a

comprehensive 'how to' guide to the internet and the second lists sites of interest to people working in CAMHS. The resource is available free of charge to members of the FOCUS network. Further information: Catherine Ayres, The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit

(tel: 020 7235 2351 ext. 256; e-mail: catherine.ayres@virgin.net).

Professor Hugh Freeman has been awarded the 650th Anniversary Medal of Merit of the Charles University of Prague.

## forthcoming events

The Forum on Learning Disability, The Royal Society of Medicine Press are holding two one-day meetings:

**Behavioural Phenotypes: Academic and Clinical Update**, which takes place on 11 May 2000 and **Therapy in Schools: Problems, Policies and Good Practice**, which takes place on 4 July 2000. The venue for both meetings is The Royal Society of Medicine Press, London. Further information: Emma Chaffin, The Royal Society of Medicine Press, 1 Wimpole Street, London W1M 8AE (tel: 020 7290 3934).

The Clinical Governance Support Service at the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit is organising a series of symposia focusing on key issues in

mental health and their relation to clinical governance. These include: **The National Service Framework for Mental Health in the Context of Clinical Governance**, on 16 May 2000; **Learning Disability Services in Relation to Clinical Governance**, on 19 June 2000 (both in London); and **Risk Management and Clinical Governance** on 26 September 2000 (Macclesfield). Further information: Sam Coombs, Communications Officer, The Royal College of Psychiatrists' Research Unit (tel: 020 7235 2351 ext. 234).

The Portman Clinic is recruiting for its **Diploma in Forensic Psychotherapeutic Studies** course. The course is aimed at professionals working in the NHS

secure units, prisons, probation offices, the courts and the community, and aims to increase understanding of the psychodynamic considerations underlying offending behaviour in a criminal context. Further information: The Portman Clinic, 8 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London NW3 5NA (tel: 020 7794 8262; e-mail: portman@taviport.org).

**Turning Policy into Practice Seminars: Integrated Care Pathways as a Quality Initiative** is the title of a one-day seminar for managers and practitioners organised by the Centre for Mental Health Services Development (CMHSD), King's College London, being held in Taunton on 23 May 2000. This workshop aims to provide an introduction