

might be possible only if an act is done in a rage. A woman seldom murders in a rage, she often commits the killing when the man is asleep. The authors show that it is necessary to get judges to understand that such a woman nevertheless may be in despair because she may have well-grounded suspicion that her life is in imminent danger and thus should be judged in a way similar to a desperate male killer. There is much valuable advice on how to assess the battered woman syndrome and thus to give women fair legal treatment.

Assessment of child abuse and neglect as well as incest have, of course, been extensively treated. Accuracy of child testimony is a key problem in the assessment of these abuses because it is necessary to obtain information from children in different developmental stages. The authors emphasized that the main problem is in encouraging children to talk about their experiences. The authors discuss studies showing that it is possible to obtain a trustworthy testimony from even very young children. They hold that the public fear of false testimonies is exaggerated if assessment is made in a conscientious way. Up-to-date knowledge of these scientific studies is essential to encourage children that someone believes them.

A great asset of the present volume is its screening of a great number of scales useful for assessment. Many are directly developed for different aspects of family violence. An often mentioned screening instrument is the Conflict Tactics Scale. The supplementary use of such other measurements as the Child Behaviour Checklist, Beck's Depression Inventory and many others is also advocated. It is amazing to realise the wide variety of such scales. I must admit that at first I was appalled when reading about the 'Cleanliness Scale', developed to get an objective measure of the amount of dirt and lack of order in a home. The case story that followed, however, made me realize that there are occasions when such a scale might be useful. It might facilitate the discussion of these matters in a non-moralistic way and also be efficient in treatment planning and evaluation of treatment outcomes.

Every chapter has extensive references. Especially important are the references to the works using scales already discussed. The authors point out that many of the described scales are still poorly investigated regarding reliability and validity, and that many require more testing in population studies. This implies that they must be used with caution, and that many assessments must be made in each case. There are still extensive amounts of research to be done in these fields.

Especially thought-provoking are the chapters on psychological abuse. The mere definition of such an act or a

behaviour as maltreatment and oppression calls for another approach than if it is defined as part of a family relations problem. The consequence is that most patients with all kinds of emotional problems should in some way be investigated with possible maltreatment in mind. This fact gives rise to the natural fear of jeopardizing the rapport with the family. These pertinent questions are only just briefly mentioned. My impression is that the authors in this book try only to make statements about what is scientifically grounded. This is both a strength and a weakness, since between the lines it minimizes a lot of important knowledge of a softer kind, probably of great interest to readers. There are not many case illustrations, but those given are very illustrative and helpful in increasing the understanding of points stated.

The different chapters are written by authors who are very experienced in their fields. Most of them come from the U.S., some from Canada and one from the U.K. All of the authors seem to share a common view of the field, resulting in different areas being treated approximately in the same way still, unnecessary repetitions are few. The book is somewhat ethnocentric because areas outside the U.S. are hardly mentioned. I still would strongly recommend it to readers from non-English speaking countries. Although practices may differ a great deal within the U.S., the discussion is mostly made in a manner easily transferred to the reader's own situation. There are also different cultural norms regarding violence, but authors convincingly show that common basic human needs still exist regardless of cultural differences.

The fact that the book is dominated by American studies may not only be due to the fact that Americans seldom read other languages but also to a true difference in clinical practice. It strengthened my interest in variations in clinical practices within and between countries. Maybe the American medical system, where doctors are easily sued for malpractice, has made Americans more keenly aware of the need for developing good assessment procedures.

Reading this book has been a challenging task. As with all really good books it creates more questions than it answers. It has certainly made me aware of the fact that it is worthwhile to follow the frontiers of such research because it may stimulate many improvements in clinical practice. I strongly recommend it to all multidisciplinary teams working in these fields.

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Essential Drug Information: The Story of a Workshop, edited by DAVID FINER and GÖRAN TOMSON, Department of International Health Care Research (IHCAR), Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, 1992. 248 pp., 70 SEK/£7/\$10. (To be ordered from: Kommentus Specialdistribution AB, Fagerstagatan 21, S-163 53 Stockholm, Sweden.)

The cover of this publication shows a medicine in tablet form in which two people can be seen exchanging information. It presents, in a nutshell, the message of the book: information is a basic ingredient of each medicine. The Action Programme on Essential Drugs, which started about 15 years ago, has focused too much on the supply of medicines. In this book the crucial importance of *Essential Drug Information* is emphasized. A drug is only a medicine if it is taken in a wholesome way. Good information on use of drugs is a prerequisite. Such information is particularly

scarce in developing countries where the scene is dominated by promotional activities of the pharmaceutical industry.

These ideas prompted the organization of a workshop on the issue by the well known Department of International Health Care Research in Stockholm. The workshop was held December 1991 in Jomtien, Thailand. More than 40 people from 12 different countries (8 in South East Asia) attended.

The specific objectives of the workshop were: "(a) to provide a forum for critical discourse on the role of drug information; (b) to assess methods of identifying problems in the use of pharmaceuticals; (c) to assess methods of preparing drug information and evaluating its effects; (d) to enable the participants to design research projects on drug information" [p. 95].

The publication contains a variety of contributions, including eight brief articles (lectures?) from different

disciplines on several aspects of drug abuse and drug information, reports on discussions and activities at the workshop, an overview of eight research proposals designed during the workshop, an account on drug information in Thailand, a useful list of references on drugs and drug information, and—printed on coloured paper—the “Jomtien Consensus on Essential Drug Information.” In this last document the participants call on governments, health workers, universities, mass media, the pharmaceutical industry and international organizations to do their part to enhance essential drug information.

This somewhat unusual book rightly calls attention to an urgent issue. An essential drugs policy does not end when the correct drugs are on the shelves. Its success lies in the healthy use of essential drugs and information constitutes a crucial link to rational use of drugs. It is no guarantee, however. On this point, the organizers and participants at the workshop seem a bit too optimistic. Information on ‘rational use’ may prove lame and ineffective as people harbour other ideas and concerns and follow *their* information and rationality. That side of the problem had

deserved more attention at the workshop and in the book.

The usual paradox of a detailed conference report is that it is least interesting for the people for whom it was made in the first place: those who did not attend. I am afraid that the heart and most precious part of this book, the lively rapportage of the workshop’s discussion, shares that lot. It retains its gist only for those who took part in the debates.

Finally, it is somewhat disappointing that the research proposals in eight different countries hardly reflect the main inspiration of the workshop: to investigate “. . . what would be essential information about drugs to various users and how to best communicate the message” [p. 12]. Most proposals focus on prescribers as if they are ‘users’ of drugs. This subtle ‘non-compliance’ by the participants, who preferred to follow their own interests instead of taking in the message of the workshop, demonstrates painfully that information does not equal practice.

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