
It is customary for trainees in general psychiatry to have an opportunity to work in child psychiatry as part of their training. However, child and adolescent psychiatry practice varies considerably from adult psychiatry. This book has been written as part of a series of Royal College of Psychiatrists seminars intended to help junior doctors during their training years. It is a multiauthored book by experienced child and adolescent psychiatrists. It provides a comprehensive and practical introduction to the subject of child and adolescent psychiatry. It follows a standard textbook approach but most chapters are short and easy to read. Chapters include the history of child psychiatry, normal and abnormal development, therapeutic relationship, the developmental stages at which they are most troublesome or apparent. There are sections describing the various treatment modes in child psychiatry as well as specific chapters on child abuse and disorders of parenting, forensic child and adolescent psychiatry, liaison work, and on continuities between child and adult problems.

The book is probably of more relevance to a psychiatric than a paediatric readership and there is limited coverage of the problems most commonly encountered at the paediatric clinic. It should, however, be useful as an introduction to the subject of child and adolescent psychiatry for trainees in psychiatry.

M E GARRALDA
Professor of child and adolescent psychiatry


As the authors themselves observe in the preface, ‘If this book appears to have all the answers, then this is folly on our part’. It doesn’t, of course, but this is a satisfyingly complete account, well suited to its function as a clinician’s handbook.

The text covers each of the major areas of abuse, including chapters on sexual abuse of children with special needs, fatal problems, and poisoning, suffocation, and Munchausen syndrome by proxy. Some of the material has been previously published in the ‘ABC’ series, but is here considerably and usefully expanded. There is a good deal of helpful forensic and pathological data, and I was pleased to see the nonsense often written about the ages of bruises receiving a thorough and authoritative demolition. Again, findings will continue to spark controversy for some time yet, but the account here is by and large well balanced. Developmental, emotional, and social factors are well covered in the relevant chapters as are some of the more difficult and ambiguous emotional features of child sexual abuse. Useful case histories illustrate the points made.

Some later chapters deal with management, psychological, and sociological aspects. It is useful to have a table of ‘tricks’ that barristers play, but techniques in dealing with them would have been very welcome! Sadly, the memorandum of good practice seems to have missed the point.

The book is clearly written, and well illustrated with 102 plates. Again, several of these appeared in the ABC series. One small point, placing a black mark across a child’s eyes in a photograph is rather irritating when the legend asks us to note the child’s ‘radar-like gaze and ... sunken eyes’!

I did not find the editorship to be of a comparable high standard. There is considerable duplication, so that child protection conferences are for example covered once under physical abuse and again in the chapter on management. A case history given in the child abuse section is suspiciously in every detailed except the age of the child to one given in the chapter on neglect. My main gripe, however, is with the way the book handles some of the grey areas. Disputed custody is discussed in two separate and false memory syndrome is not referred to. Ritual abuse seems somewhat uncritically accepted, without mention of the supposed supernatural events reported, lack of forensic evidence, lack of a full multi-disciplinary examination, or the manipulation of the subject by some religious groups. Some excellent reviews of the subject are quoted from so selectively and so far out of context as to be unrecognisable.

Having got that off my chest, overall I would say this forms a useful introduction to the subject for aspiring paediatricians, and source of useful data and food for thought for the more experienced practitioners.

A STANTON
Consultant community paediatrician


Thomas Huxley once remarked that the greatest tragedy of science was the slaying of beautiful hypotheses by ugly facts. The research into cystic fibrosis is a classic example but at long last there is real hope that the pool of knowledge derived from molecular studies with the delta F508 and other cystic fibrosis associated inus will eventually lead to the development of effective medical treatments. Anyone with whatever interest in cystic fibrosis will find these and other issues discussed in this delightful volume, which is a delight to read.