

## PG NOTES IN PSYCHIATRY

Dayal Narayan

Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College Kozhikode.

Correspondence: Department of Psychiatry, Government Medical College Kozhikode. E-mail: dayalnarayan@gmail.com

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Reviewing a book whose title very specifically says “PG notes” can be both challenging and interesting at the same time for a person who has experienced the role change from a PG to a PG teacher. It was with these mixed feelings that I set out to do the same.

It is not very unusual that one feels compelled to document or record the results of one’s meticulous and systematic efforts in learning a subject thoroughly. We all do it when we do some serious reading for classes, presentations and reviews of books. But to prepare a manuscript aimed at trainees appearing for examinations could pose some serious challenges. Subjective opinions and assumptions cannot find a place in such a work. Similarly, factual accuracy is very crucial and options for making the content readable and interesting are relatively limited. As a ready reckoner for examinations, comprehensive coverage of topics is very important while not allowing the final product to be too bulky and unattractive. Considering these, the author, who in his very first attempt on making his contribution to successive groups of residents in psychiatry, has taken a very bold challenge on his shoulders.

Under six broad divisions, the book has maintained good balance in selection of topics, the space

allocated to each topic and the order in which they are arranged.

The first section is Introduction to Psychiatry and one should say the history of Psychiatry gets an extremely limited space only. The remaining topics on clinical evaluation, symptoms and signs and classificatory systems are concise and adequate.

The next section is on Basic Sciences and it gets adequate space and details for a trainee. Apart from basic principles of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology and neurochemistry, genetics in relation to psychiatric disorders and basic research methods find their place in a few pages of this section.

Third section on Psychology is sufficiently elaborate. The author has covered the sections on psychoanalysis, theories of personality, learning, intelligence etc. in simple and clear manner. Topics like emotions, motivation, memory, learned helplessness, attachment theory, social psychology and psychodiagnostics get separate space due to their repeated appearance in examinations.

Section four deals with core psychiatry and chapters are devoted to substance use disorders, psychoses, mood disorders, anxiety spectrum disorders, other neurobehavioral problems and personality disorders. Followed by an elaborate and comprehensive coverage on schizophrenia, space allocated to other psychoses is comparatively meagre. Chapter on neurotic, stress related and somatoform disorders has notes on anxiety disorders, OCD, stress related disorders, dissociative and conversion disorders, somatoform

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disorders and also entities like neurasthenia, depersonalization-derealization, culture bound syndromes and chronic fatigue syndrome. Behavioral disorders related to eating, sleep and sexual function are grouped together in a chapter. Another chapter is on personality disorders, impulse control disorders and factitious disorders, and rationale for clubbing them together remains unclear. Chapter on biological therapies gives a general outline of psychopharmacological principles followed by some useful data on different drug classes and some major side effects. Other physical treatment methods (ECT, vagal nerve stimulation, deep brain stimulation, rTMS and psychosurgeries) also are mentioned.

Section five is titled specialty psychiatry but it includes, apart from special populations (child and adolescent, women, geriatric) dedicated chapters for forensic, emergency and community psychiatry. Besides, it also incorporates psychotherapy, mental health act, neuroimaging and neurophysiological tests, biomarkers etc.

The next section deals with organic psychiatry and neurological disorders in relation to psychiatry, psychosomatic medicine and medicine in relation to psychiatry.

This book is written in a very simple and readable language, though one cannot be expected to read a compilation of notes like this from cover to cover at one go. The layout is very good and uses appropriately big font size. Pages are large and the paper quality and binding are also very good. One major limitation is the size of the book, considering

that it might be too big to handle in day-to-day use. That is where the blank spaces left after each chapter become very costly.

## SUGGESTIONS

Regarding the content, this book has maintained very good standard in terms of accuracy. Use of abbreviations is a norm in notes, but an appendix providing a key to abbreviation (especially names/titles of epidemiological studies, clinical trials etc.) would be very useful for students. Typographical errors are a few in number and could be easily rectified in reprints. As a reviewer, my only major difference of opinion with the author is the totally empirical way of grouping certain topics/chapters and occasional lack of care in sticking to any particular classificatory system in one or two chapters in core psychiatry.

Notes are never meant to be a substitute to textbooks and this is not an exception. Personally, I am not a big fan of printed materials called notes being used as major source of information by any student. But unfortunately, notes are a reality in today's medical education scenario and the only option left to us is to ensure that they are of sufficient quality. The author deserves congratulations in his maiden venture and postgraduate trainees will find this a useful addition to their study materials.

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