
Despite its rather interesting title, this well organised book is not about the prevalence of mental illness in the corridors of power. The subtitle, "Who cares for the mentally ill?" is more accurate, in that it is the authors' declared intent to present "a case study of the political, social and clinical factors in public policy decisions affecting the dependent mentally ill since 1945". They confine themselves to the American experience, although deference is paid to the pioneering work of British and European psychiatrists in establishing "open-door" policies and psychopharmacological treatments.

Surprisingly, it is a much more interesting book that its subject matter would at first suggest. At its heart there is a detailed description of the complex wheeler-dealing involved in establishing Community Mental Health Centres (CMHCs) as the basis of mental health care in the USA. This is accomplished in six solid chapters, though the authors thoughtfully provide a list of the "Key Institutional Players" to guide one through the masses of committees and individuals involved. The text is also sprinkled with arresting facts and tables. For example, 12% of men called up in 1942 for military service were exempted on neuro-psychiatric grounds, while the table describing the growth of the Mental Health Professions in America between 1956 and 1980 shows increases of over 300% in the numbers of psychologists and social workers.

The writing style though is probably best described as "American factualse", while numerous repetitions and references to peculiarly American systems can make the English reader find it rather hard work. The final third of the book is then devoted to presidential addresses, by Kennedy and by Carter, and the statute laws involved.

Overall, one might be tempted to consign this work to the worthy but dull category, given that Community Psychiatry is a topic unlikely to interest people outside the speciality. But the rewards of a little concentration are considerable. Insights into the very complexity of health care politics make one wonder at the stamina of those involved. While the central theme, of federal concern and funding, "giving a dam" as they say, versus localised and patchy provision of health care, is fascinating. For it is clear that hovering in the background is the notion of an American style NHS, something that is anathema to a large number of American physicians. In this sense "Madness and Government" is a political book, but its relevance is also clinical in that it provides a handy summary of the important factors involved in the health care business generally. Anyone concerned with the problems of maintaining a reasonable health system, whatever their special interest, could only find it useful.

TH TURNER


This well known text book has been extensively revised for its new edition, after the comparatively short period of 5 years. The great majority of contributors are based around Edinburgh, but the editors comment that the book should be regarded first and foremost as a British text book. There are thirteen chapters concerned with basic science and other aspects of psychiatry, which might be regarded as non-clinical. These include an interesting and rather idiosyncratic historical introduction and a number of excellent chapters, particularly on "The psychiatric interview", "The genetics of mental disorders", and "Measurement in psychiatry". Professor Kendell's discussion on "Diagnoses and classification" remains from the previous edition, but stands the test of time very well. He has also contributed three excellent chapters on the psychoses to the total of 27 chapters on clinical issues. Most of these are of a high order, in particular those chapters which are new to the present edition. The editors have allowed a certain freedom to the authors, which makes for refreshing reading. This extends to the number of references which vary considerably and also whether "further reading" is suggested as opposed to merely referring to points in the text. The only surprising omission considering its provenance are chapters on liaison psychiatry and on psychiatric illness in the mentally handicapped — one would hope for these in a further edition.

But this remains a text book of high standard, which will be valued by students and post graduates.

JLT BIRLEY


It is always a pleasure to welcome the second edition of a useful and popular book. The first edition of Hollister's text found ready acceptance for its authoritative review of the field of clinical psychopharmacology. The second edition, by some legerdemain, has been compressed from 239 to 214 pages without any substantial loss of content.

The text deals in a fairly circumscribed way with clinical psychopharmacology, although theoretical aspects such as neurotransmitters and mental illnesses are not excluded. Rather exceptionally for an American book, the content ranges more widely than the drugs available in the United States. The most notable exception is the omission of mianserin. This book will be as deservedly successful as its predecessor.

MALCOLM LADER