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BOOK REVIEW

Treating Child and Adolescent Mental Illness: A Practical, All-in-One Guide

by Jess P. Shatkin, MD, MPH; New York: WW Norton & Company, 2009 387 pages " \$35 (hardcover) | February 25, 2010

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Treating Child and Adolescent Mental Illness: A Practical, All-in-One Guide

is just what its title promises: a clinically relevant, encompassing yet concise guide to child and adolescent mental health care. Dr Shatkin's book serves as a useful primer for medical and mental health clinicians who do not specialize in the treatment of children and adolescents but who find themselves faced with the growing demand to provide mental health services to this sector. It is also a handy refresher for child and adolescent clinicians called on to treat disorders seen less often in their practices, as well as a reference for nonphysicians less familiar with psychopharmacological interventions.

The book is user-friendly, and the breadth of information presented is impressive. The text is well organized with chapters on specific classes of disorders, in between brief overviews of key principles of clinical research, historical and theoretical factors, and psychopharmacology. These overviews place information in historical, scientific, and public health contexts and enhance the reader's ability to understand and critically evaluate the specific child and adolescent mental disorders.

The preface gives epidemiological data underscoring the disparities between a rising need for child and adolescent mental health care services and the dearth of available providers. A helpful 2-page "Note About Clinical Studies" explains clinical research methodology, with pros and cons of different research designs and comments about the availability (or lack thereof) of gold standard studies to guide child and adolescent intervention practices.

The introduction then presents an overview of the history of child mental health, key theories of psychotherapy and development, risk and resiliency, diversity, adolescence, and psychiatric diagnosis. At the end of the book, an appendix on child and adolescent psychopharmacology provides background on the history of the use of psychotropic medications in children, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics pertaining specifically to children and adolescents, evaluation and treatment considerations, and black box warnings about antidepressants.

Chapters 2 through 15 address mental illnesses specific to children and adolescents: ADHD, disruptive behavior disorders, learning disorders, speech and language disorders, mental retardation, autism spectrum disorders, Tourette and tic disorders, anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and psychosis, substance use disorders, eating disorders, and sleep disorders. Each

chapter covers the clinical presentation, etiology, epidemiology, clinical course, diagnosis, and treatment of the specific disorders. There are practical tools, such as questions to ask in diagnostic interviews and guidelines for better understanding resources such as 504 plans and Individualized Education Plans.

The treatment section in each chapter includes empirically based pharmacological and nonpharmacological interventions. The discussions of nonpharmacological treatments identify key principles and methods but are limited in terms of how actually to implement these interventions. Thus, the book is a useful guide for where to refer patients or what interventions to use from an existing skill set.

Treating Child and Adolescent Mental Illness: A Practical, All-in-One Guide stands to be one of those “go-to” resources that a wide range of clinicians will regularly pull from the shelf.
