Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder: Theory, Research, and Treatment


Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Comprehensive, up-to-date coverage of learning theory and biological issues
Weaknesses: Whole area of psychoanalytical contribution is excluded; no mention of emotional aspects
Audience: Therapists, researchers, clients with some background in learning theory and neurophysiology

Since behaviour therapy techniques such as systematic desensitization and, particularly, exposure and response prevention demonstrated powerful therapeutic effects on obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD), the interest in this previously refractory psychiatric condition has exponentially increased. So did the publica-
tions. Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder: Theory, Research, and Treatments is a collection of papers by 41 authorities. It is based on recent contributions of learning theories, and biological and neurophysiological advances in the understanding and treatment of OCD. It is organized into 4 parts: Psychopathology and Theoretical Perspectives, Assessment and Treatment, Obsessive Compulsive Spectrum Disorders and an appendix.

There is a logical and smooth transition throughout, with very little repetition. References and resources are abundant. What is missing is some contribution of psychodynamic schools, which have produced the best descriptions of OCD. In addition, the person with OCD who is able to function emotionally is almost totally bypassed, but this is true for most literature on OCD.

The book is the best suited for mental health therapists and researchers and might be of some use to clients with a knowledge in learning theories, biology and neurophysiology.

Hizjia H. Bajramovic, MD
Director
Outpatient Psychiatry Department
Ottawa Hospital – General Campus
Ottawa, Ont.

Reference
1. Cooper JE, Gelder MG, Marks IM. Results of behaviour therapy in 77 psychiatric patients. BMJ 1965;1:1222-5.

Childhood Abuse and Chronic Pain: A Curious Relationship?


Overall rating: Fair
Strengths: Identiﬁes possible cause of chronic pain
Weaknesses: Approach far too narrow
Audience: Analytically oriented psychotherapists

Childhood Abuse and Chronic Pain: A Curious Relationship? reflects more Professor Roy’s interest in childhood abuse than his understanding of chronic pain. I believe it is still too soon to be publishing anecdotal accounts of treatment in this area. This is my main criticism of the book. Because of this limitation it will not be of great help to those treating chronic pain.

Why, in the title, Roy calls the relationship between childhood abuse and chronic pain a “curious relationship” is diﬃcult to understand when one realizes how complex the aetiology of chronic pain can be, and how diversely damaging a history of childhood abuse is.

Pain is a perception. Perception is inﬂuenced by the subject’s level of arousal and attention, personality type (extroversion v. introversion), as well as past experience and learned behaviour, including cultural factors. This incomplete list nevertheless suﬃces to suggest a possible explanation for Roy’s observations regarding childhood abuse as a possible aetiology when examining chronic psychosocial pain patients; and one has to agree with his observation that both the quality and quantity of published research on these issues falls short.

Roy’s experience would make an interesting lecture, but hardly justiﬁes a book.

Keith I. Pearce, MD, MB, BS
Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry
Faculty of Medicine
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alta.

Ask the Doctor: Depression


Overall rating: Very good
Strengths: Complete, well written, organized, comfortable style
Weaknesses: Requires high school education level to read
Audience: Patients and families

This book was written to provide just enough information about the common and important condition of depression to a sophisticated lay audience. It achieves that goal in a comfortable, readable format at reasonable cost.

The information provided is much more complete and helpful than any brochures I’ve seen. Its style is friendly and logical and should encourage healthy behaviour in patients who would beneﬁt from more information than most physicians have time to provide.