

The Hatherleigh Guide to Psychopharmacology.

Powell SM, editor. Hatherleigh Press, Long Island City, New York, 1999.

Softcover, 384 pages. \$42.00.

The *Hatherleigh Guide to Psychopharmacology* is intended as a practical reference for all mental health professionals. However, it is unlike other reference books, in that it is organized as a collection of review articles on selected topics rather than as a systematic guide to psychopharmacology. Each chapter is a self-contained article written by a different contributor, many of them very well known in the field.

Four chapters are devoted to the treatment of depression. One provides a concise overview of the stages of treatment in depressive disorders (i.e., acute, continuation, and maintenance phases). Another provides an excellent review of the clinical course and pharmacotherapy of dysthymia. The chapter most specifically related to pharmacology (pharmacokinetics and adverse reactions) focuses on the “newer” antidepressants; however, it is less well referenced than the other chapters. Information in the drug interaction section in particular must be interpreted cautiously, as it is not necessarily up to date; although the text was published in 1999, the most recent references in this chapter are from 1996. The fourth chapter describes the pharmacology and clinical use of the monoamine oxidase inhibitors.

Three chapters address the treatment of bipolar disorder. One is devoted to the pharmacoeconomics of using lithium or divalproex therapy. The other two chapters discuss approaches to treatment-resistant bipolar disorder. Although they provide some information about the place of medications in therapy and about the side effects of drug therapy, notably missing, at least from the pharmacist’s perspective, is information about the pharmacokinetics of mood stabilizers and the role of therapeutic drug monitoring.

Two of the three chapters related to antipsychotic medications provide a good overview of the atypical antipsychotics and an interesting discussion of the psychopharmacology of negative symptoms. The older antipsychotics are not specifically covered, although they are alluded to in the third chapter, which is devoted to the patient’s view of antipsychotic therapy, a topic not always emphasized in the pharmacology literature.

One chapter focuses on benzodiazepine addiction, tolerance, and dependence. The usefulness of this clinical review is limited, in that important statements are made with few or no references. The abuse potential of benzodiazepines is not adequately represented since their reinforcing properties are not compared with those of other substances of abuse. The recommendations for withdrawal treatment are limited to a rapid dosage reduction over 1 to 2 weeks; they do not address the management of therapeutic dose withdrawal, usually recommended to take place over several months.

In addition to these therapeutically based chapters, 3 other chapters represent valuable reviews of particular issues within the field of psychopharmacology: drug interactions (overlapping with the chapter discussed above), treatment considerations during the perinatal period, and cross-cultural perspectives, focussing on pharmacokinetic and cultural differences among African Americans, Asians, and Latin Americans.

In general, parts of this book are interesting and useful, but the independent nature of each chapter results in inconsistencies in style and quality, as well as a certain degree of overlap. Significant areas of psychopharmacology are missing, most notably the treatment of anxiety disorders (including panic disorder, obsessive–compulsive disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder), eating disorders, cognitive disorders, and attention deficit disorder.

In summary, this book provides a review of selected topics in psychopharmacology but is not a comprehensive reference for quick information retrieval. Although promoted as a reference for all mental health professionals, pharmacists may not find the detail they require for day-to-day clinical practice.

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