BOOK REVIEWS

The Dementias: Diagnosis and Management

This book, edited and written in large part by Myron F. Weiner, MD, professor of psychiatry, assistant professor of neurology, and vice-chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Texas, serves first and foremost as a myth breaker.

It is commonly believed that dementia is an inevitable and untreatable aspect of aging. However, although more common in the elderly, dementia is not a concomitant of aging, and many symptoms are amenable to treatment. Weiner and his colleagues have studied more than 300 cases of suspected dementia in their clinic, which was the clinical core of a federally funded research study on Alzheimer disease.

Occupational therapists might find it particularly interesting that most persons with dementia live with their families, and it is often the caregiver with whom the health care worker must deal with most often.

Management strategy, according to this book, depends on several factors, including the firm establishment of a diagnosis and knowledge of whether the dementia is static, progressive, or irreversible; familiarity with the client, with his or her life situation, and with the demands made on him or her; and knowledge of the amount and type of support that is available.

In an excellent chapter on psychological and behavioral management, the use of Piaget's description of cognitive maturation in children is described as a guide for grading degree of dementia. Although useful, Piaget's stages do not completely parallel the stages of dementia, but are useful as a diagnostic aid. In the first stage of Piaget's model, the sensorimotor stage, the child cannot maintain a mental image of a person or object and experiences an internal affec-

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