Shorter Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry
Edited by Michael Gelder, Paul Harrison and Philip Cowen.

This book is written by three eminent Oxford University professors of psychiatry with contributions from a team of chapter advisors specializing in various mental health disciplines. It is described as the standard text for trainee psychiatrists but is also aimed at medical students, general practitioners and qualified psychiatrists. The authors state that the content has been revised thoroughly to take into account new research and changes in clinical practice since the publication of the previous edition.

The text is clearly laid out in 26 chapters covering the main mental health disorders encountered in clinical practice including chapters on the elderly and children. Initial chapters detail the symptomatology of psychiatric disorders, classification (ICD-10 and DSM-IV), diagnosis and clinical assessment. Information is always presented concisely with relevant clinical material summarized in
boxes and tables. Information on current treatment is accompanied by a summary of the evidence base underpinning its use. The text is a pleasure to read.

The book’s main use to occupational physicians is as an accessible reference to the classification, diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Bearing in mind its target audience, there is inevitably minimal detail as to how these disorders affect function or work capability. However, useful information about prognosis, especially of mood disorders, will help occupational physicians to advise on sickness absence and long-term incapacity. Advice is offered about the value of work in mild depression, describing work as a ‘valuable distraction from depressive thoughts and a source of companionship’. The chapter on ‘Reactions to Stressful Experiences’ will facilitate the reader’s understanding of acute stress reactions, post-traumatic stress disorder and adjustment disorders. The topical concept, however, of ‘work-related stress’ is not considered as a separate entity.

In conclusion, the book fulfils its aim of being an excellent textbook for doctors in training, students and other clinicians dealing with psychiatric illness in everyday practice. It represents good value for money. I would recommend it to occupational physicians as a first class text to dip into to refresh their knowledge of a particular disorder and its treatment.

Rating

★★ (Reference only)

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