A New Chapter

After 12 years of tireless efforts, Hagop S. Akiskal, M.D., is relinquishing his editorship of the Journal’s book review section. Thanks to his dedication, Dr. Akiskal, along with his reviewers, has guided our readers in building personal libraries of lasting value.

Throughout his tenure, Dr. Akiskal sought out young and upcoming clinicians to write the reviews that appeared in the pages of the Journal. His choices were designed to provide an opportunity to worthy young reviewers to reach a worldwide audience.

Our readers have greatly benefited during Dr. Akiskal’s stewardship. We are all in his debt and hope to take advantage of his keen insights and advice as he becomes a member of our Editorial Board.

It is also our pleasure to announce that Michael H. Ebert, M.D., has been appointed as a second Deputy Editor of The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry and, in this capacity, will oversee the book review section. Dr. Ebert is Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Vanderbilt University and is a world-renowned researcher and educator. Under Dr. Ebert’s watchful eye, the Journal will continue its long-standing tradition of offering our readers concise and practical reviews of some of the most interesting and worthwhile books available today.

Alan J. Gelenberg, M.D.
Editor in Chief

John S. Shelton, Ph.D.
Publisher

Irving Shelton
Publisher
A Renaissance of Clinical Psychiatry
Through Books Published During the Past Decade

Hagop S. Akiskal, M.D.
Department of Psychiatry, University of California at San Diego

Through a group review of representative books published during the last decade, the author hails a renaissance in clinical psychiatry. This is characterized by renewed interest in psychopathology, focus on discrete mental disorders, sophisticated methodology, greater appreciation of the biological underpinnings of mental phenomena, and integration of traditional psychological approaches within a general medical framework. Although an evolutionary perspective is not yet a dominant theme of the new psychiatry, it is predicted that it will play an increasingly important role in helping the integration of physiology, psychoanalysis, and contemporary psychopathology.

I am formally signing off as Book Review Editor after 12 years. Major changes have occurred in psychiatry during this period. These changes have brought psychiatry closer to medicine. This was reflected in a group review that I published in 1987, entitled “The New Biopsychiatry” (JCP 48:382–384). Since then, the trend has continued toward greater refinement in biological methodology and sophisticated clinical approaches that integrate biomedicine with the more classical concerns of psychiatry. The result has been a true Renaissance in psychopathology. The 25 books that constitute this review illustrate this transformation of psychiatry into a clinical science. The brief descriptions which I give of each book will explain my specific choices in each instance.

This farewell review is largely confined to the books that are sent to us for review; nonetheless, I actively sought certain books from publishers that I felt to be relevant to my theme. The list of books is, therefore, representative and not exhaustive. I have chosen them because they exemplify new developments in specific areas of clinical psychiatry. Also, I had to limit myself to first editions and excluded edited books and textbooks. They are listed in alphabetical order by author and no price is quoted: these are priceless books that reflect some of the very best of the new psychiatry.
A compendium of the author’s contributions, which have helped in redefining the entire field of consultation-liaison psychiatry.

This book by psychologist Rodney Lowman will provide psychiatrists extensive and well-researched information on how to help their patients find the best jobs commensurate with their abilities, temperament, and level of psychopathology.

All that you need to know about the subject from a master on anxiety and related disorders.

A masterpieces that every psychiatrist should attempt to read, to understand how mental functions and behavior have evolved as part of the triune brain.

A user-friendly reference that covers nearly everything the clinician needs to know about the relationship of physical disease and psychopathology.

A thought-provocative and delightful book on the evolutionary explanations of physical and mental dysfunction.

The authors tell the reader everything that their clinical experience has taught them about the private daily hell that this disease represents for its sufferers.

Dr. Phillips illustrates how astute clinical observation and systematic follow-up can shed light on the suffering of this particular brand of private hell, leading to new treatments.

The reader will note perhaps that some major clinical areas are not represented in the foregoing review: schizophrenia, substance abuse, eating disorders, and sleep disorders. Their omission is due to my judgment that no definitive books written by one or two authors have appeared on these topics during the past decade. I hope this will provoke the talent in our field to undertake the ambitious task! Finally, I trust that Jeffrey Cummings will write the definitive book on dementia and neuropsychiatry; meanwhile, the interested reader should read his superb summaries dispersed in the literature.

If I have succeeded in surprising some readers for having chosen four titles devoted to evolutionary aspects of psychopathology, this was intended. Psychiatry can no longer neglect an evolutionary framework. Such a framework promises to provide clinically meaningful links between our biological nature and adaptation to geologic, social, and cultural change. This framework also provides the opportunity of a rapprochement between biological psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Finally, evolutionary considerations can cross-fertilize the field of psychotherapy, which has been in search of a scientific perspective since Freud. A beginning towards this end has been made by Kalman Glantz and John Pearce (Exiles From Eden, New York: WW Norton, 1989).