

Book Review

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Effective Treatments for PTSD: Practice Guidelines From the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

*edited by Edna B. Foa, Ph.D.; Terence M. Keane, Ph.D.; and Matthew J. Friedman, M.D., Ph.D.
Guilford Press, New York, N.Y., 2000, 379 pages, \$44.00.*

Effective Treatments for PTSD, edited by Drs. Foa, Keane, and Friedman, is a most timely book. It is attuned to our current emphasis on practice guidelines that are derived from evidence-based psychiatry. The work is sponsored by the PTSD Treatment Guidelines Task Force of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. Although under 400 pages, the volume is exhaustive in several ways. It reviews nearly all of the relevant research literature and includes 14 different treatment approaches for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), from psychological debriefing to creative therapies, with lengthy references for all treatments.

Following a review of the treatment research literature, clinical practice guidelines are developed in the second section of the book. The last chapter of the book, an integration and summary of research findings and clinical guidelines, is excellent and most relevant to the practicing clinician. Several of the therapeutic approaches presented deserve mention. The treatment of children and adolescents is clearly presented in a separate chapter, as is a therapy known as eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. Some therapies, such as inpatient therapy, are best described as metatherapies, since they are, more precisely, sites where numerous additional therapies can take place.

Although this volume provides a foundation for evidence-based treatment of PTSD, there is, unfortunately, little adequate research in many of the areas covered. For example, even though many people who have experienced a traumatic event are routinely debriefed, there is little scientific support for debriefing as therapy. In fact, the most important evidence-based findings are related to the use of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors for treatment of some of the symptoms of PTSD and exposure therapy for other symptoms. If we had to develop practice parameters based purely on research of a high standard, we would have only minimal guidelines. Thus, this book is a helpful first step toward underlining our need for further research into the etiology, pathogenesis, and treatment of PTSD. Most clinicians bring a variety of treatment approaches to their patients with PTSD, including cognitive-behavioral techniques, pharmacotherapy, group therapy, hypnosis, and family therapy, depending on the resources available and the patients' needs. Usually, these therapies are offered conjointly, and without sequential testing of these modalities, establishment of efficacy for any single therapy is difficult. Thus, what could be emphasized in future research are studies of combined therapy.

The components of PTSD, such as intrusive thoughts and re-experiencing the trauma, avoidance and numbing, and hyperarousal, may respond differentially to the various therapies and sites of therapy such as outpatient, inpatient, and psychosocial rehabilitation settings. In addition, at the biological level, these 3 major aspects of PTSD deserve individual study, as they may have different origins. Design of new therapies or specific combinations of older therapies may be enhanced when we have a deeper biological understanding of PTSD. It would be useful to the field of psychiatry if further volumes are prepared that take the evidence-based practice guideline approach for other psychiatric syndromes.

The editors and authors of *Effective Treatments for PTSD* should be commended for combining the meager, but best available, scientific evidence and clinical experience to form a basis for practice guidelines. In some respects, the book is too inclusive of modest-to-poor research in this area and too brief in discussing what we clearly know will inform therapy. The volume will, of course, be used primarily by researchers, but clinicians searching for scientific foundations for their work, no matter how thin, will see in this book the future of psychiatric practice.

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