

The international handbook of addiction behaviour, edited by Ilana Belle Glass, London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991; ISBN 0-415-06189-X (Hardback), 0-415-04127-9 Paperback).

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Addiction and dependence are surely one of the Cinderella specialities of medicine; poorly financed, with inadequate facilities for practise, and under-resourcing of academic departments and research work in universities and medical schools. The discipline's importance can readily be appreciated if one thinks only of the overall health-care implications of the multifarious diseases associated with tobacco addiction and alcohol abuse, and with the spread of HIV infection and hepatitis in intra-venous drug abusers.

The neglect of addiction as a discipline is in part a reflection of its own parlous development as a coherent area of study, lacking a clear intellectual rationale and a systematic approach to seemingly disparate problems. This book reviews together very many of the separate areas of addiction by authors whose common denominator is having taught on the Diploma in Addiction Behaviour at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, thereby creating one of the few volumes that can genuinely claim to be a textbook of addiction as a whole. In so doing it should help the eventual unification and integration of the many small, separate sovereign states and fiefdoms which must form the larger federation that the discipline requires.

Integration will not be easy. Addictive behaviours show that 'polymorphous perversity' described by Freud; there seems to be hardly any plant substance, drug, or synthetic chemical which has not been abused by one of so many possible routes - and one heaves a sigh of relief on reading that "Domestic natural gas is not abused...", only then to be told that however butane is abused. By way of additional complication, addiction can also encompass behaviours such as gambling (included in this book) or dieting or exercise (not included).

Theories of addiction are equally polymorphic: as Drummond puts it, "Addictions ... [have] been seen at various times as being due to social conditions, disease, internal conflict, personality disorder, economics, conditioned learning, faulty cognitions and genetic inheritance". Almost all of those theories are included somewhere in this volume, be it in relation to aetiology, therapy or prevention.

The level of presentation is varied, as expected in a book with sixty contributors, ranging from the propagandist (and barely useful) to the scholarly. In general there is surprisingly little reference to formal, systematic studies, and one is left with the overall feeling, as Griffith Edwards states in the final chapter, of the desperate need to answer "Plain jobbing research questions of an everyday nature", adequate studies being "greatly needed and woefully scant". Such criticisms are, however, criticisms of the discipline not of the book. It will undoubtedly be the best starting point for many years for those wishing to understand the broad perspective of dependence in any of its plurality of manifestations.