
The Psychiatrist as Expert Witness, 2nd ed.

by Thomas G. Gutheil, MD. American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc, Washington, DC, 2009, 165 pages, \$64.00 (paper).

Are you considering expanding your practice beyond routine office visits? Could you be thinking about using your skills as a psychiatrist in new ways? Perhaps you have been having sleepless nights because the court has subpoenaed you to testify about a patient. The area of forensic psychiatry can be just as confusing and frightening as it is interesting and exhilarating. The second edition of Dr Gutheil's text is an excellent resource for those voluntarily venturing into the field of forensic psychiatry or for those who have been unexpectedly thrust into the arena without preparation.

The Psychiatrist as Expert Witness, Second Edition, convincingly relays the basics of forensic work. The book is divided into easily digestible chapters such as "The Expert in Trial" and "Writing to and for the Legal System." Each chapter contains pertinent, succinct information that comes to life with real-world experiences and anecdotes. The chapters are further subdivided in the table of contents for easy reference. The index provides a listing of key topics and issues that is more than adequate for the 11 chapters.

In addition to Dr Gutheil's careful and clear description of forensic practice in the main text, the 4 appendices should not be overlooked. These include important examples of a consent agreement, standard and detailed fee agreements, and references for further information. There is also a brief but appropriate glossary. At the end of each chapter, there are additional listings of suggested readings.

The text provides guidance on a range of forensic topics from report writing to efficient traveling, but this is not meant to be an

exhaustive reference. Here, the author provides only a basic introduction to the forensic interview, and there is no information with regard to assessing criteria for the insanity defense or how to effectively gauge specific capacities. The book's tone assumes that the reader understands how to evaluate an individual, but the novice expert may quickly, and frustratingly, find that forensic interviews demand unique approaches.

The reader will appreciate the discussion of ethical issues related to communicating with attorneys and the courts, writing reports, and handling nuances of a case from start to finish. A brazen expert can easily sink his or her case, and potentially his or her reputation, through a poor understanding of the ethical concepts surrounding forensic work. Although the second chapter is dedicated to ethical issues, the author does well by including ethical discussions throughout the text.

The reader will understand that although this book is not an exhaustive text on forensic psychiatry, it is especially practical and demands reading. Dr Gutheil's guide for the expert witness is a bright lighthouse for practitioners who are eager to navigate the difficult yet exciting waters of forensic psychiatry. Psychiatrists new to the forensic arena will greatly benefit from the author's exhaustive experiences and gain confidence in undertaking this type of work.

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Potential conflicts of interest: None reported.

doi:10.4088/JCP.11bk07128

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