

Psychotherapy for Depression in Older Adults

edited by Sara H. Qualls and Bob G. Knight. In book series: *Wiley Series in Clinical Geropsychology*. Qualls SH, ed. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, N.J., 2006, 288 pages, \$60.00 (hardcover).

Psychotherapy for Depression in Older Adults is the first book in the *Wiley Series in Clinical Geropsychology*, which is directed primarily at psychologists who are currently, or seeking to begin, working with an aging patient population. As the authors are quick to point out, the demographic of the American population, regardless of ethnic group or socioeconomic status, is shifting toward a greater geriatric representation as the "baby boomer" cohort comes of retirement age. In the face of this aging population, however, there is a lack of professionals trained in the mental health needs of the elderly.

Unless specializing in geriatrics, most physicians receive only a cursory introduction to the changes in physiology and anatomy an aging person will undergo; moreover, little time in medical education is devoted to the changing emotional needs and social stressors of the aging patient. This book offers a general, but highly informative, overview of some of these needs and illustrates some of the approaches that psychologists have available to them as they enter into a therapeutic relationship with an older patient.

The book is divided into 3 parts. The first primarily focuses on the etiology and assessment of depression in the older adult, paying attention to new stresses faced not only by patients as they age, but also by clinicians as they enter into a therapeutic relationship with a person who, in general, comes to them with more "life experience."

The second part of the book is a well-referenced overview of the theory and application of different systems of psychotherapy and their unique applications to the geriatric population. The systems covered are cognitive-behavioral therapy, interpersonal psychotherapy, and problem-solving therapy. Each of these systems is presented relative to a common case presentation, usefully affording the reader an opportunity to examine the differences in approach to a common problem. This part ends with a discussion of clinical evidence supporting the uses of these systems.

The third and concluding part includes sections detailing social and cultural aspects of psychotherapy with older adults, psychotherapy in the context of long-term care focusing on caring for patients in residential settings, and the fundamentals of establishing a practice for geriatric mental health care.

While this book is primarily aimed at psychologists rather than general practice physicians or psychiatrists, it nonetheless provides a valuable overview of the mental health needs of older adults and illustrates various approaches to addressing these needs, while explaining specific and practical aspects of documentation and Medicare-compliance issues valuable to any clinician with an aging clientele. Evidence is well documented with useful citations and references for further study. Indexes reference both subject and author, providing the reader with fast and easy access to specific topics.

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**Learning Cognitive-Behavior Therapy:
An Illustrated Guide**

by Jesse H. Wright, M.D., Ph.D.; Monica R. Basco, Ph.D.; and Michael E. Thase, M.D. In book series: *Core Competencies in Psychotherapy*. Gabbard GO, ed. American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc., Washington, D.C., 2005, 300 pages, \$59.00 (paperback/DVD edition).

Anxiety disorders and depression are common diagnoses and are also common comorbid (coexisting) conditions with any chronic medical conditions seen in most outpatient clinical settings. Primary care physicians in particular will see many of these patients. Early identification and comprehensive management of comorbid illnesses that accompany chronic medical conditions play a very crucial role in patient care. Many medically ill patients may not be in a condition to receive or tolerate psychotropic medications along with the ongoing medical treatment. Hence, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) becomes an effective alternative option for managing these patients.

Learning Cognitive Behavior Therapy: An Illustrated Guide was written for trainees and practicing clinicians to help them achieve competency in CBT. This book is a start-up guide for the beginning practitioner and also refreshes the essential skills of those already practicing CBT. Authors have accomplished their goal by providing case vignettes, learning exercises, charts, worksheets, checklists, tables, and video illustrations.

The authors have used a wide range of sources, including scientific articles and books. The evidence, procedures, and ideas presented are well embedded in the existing literature on CBT. I found this book especially interesting because it provides not only a theoretical framework but also practical tips through clinical case vignettes. The therapist-client dialogues provided in the book and demonstration of key CBT methods through videos make it easy to understand and absorb the core CBT skills. These clinical case vignettes add value and liveliness to the book. This guide is designed to provide 3 major ways to learn essential skills of CBT: reading, seeing, and doing. The videos provided along with the book are intended to be watched in the sequence in which the topics they cover appear in the book and at the time of reading specific topics/skills. Authors have organized the chapters meaningfully to reflect the way that therapy progresses in a session. A major portion of the book is devoted to demonstrating the CBT methods in text and illustrating key skills through videos.

Although the authors have tried to simplify psychotherapy-related technical terms, students and clinicians from non-psychology backgrounds may find these terms difficult to understand. The authors could have provided a glossary of such terms; however, they have provided a list of useful resources for further reading. Also, ethical issues in psychotherapy could have been discussed in detail.

This book will serve well as an introduction to CBT and also as a guide to practicing CBT. As such, clinical practitioners, mental health trainees, lay counselors, and, indeed, trainers from academic institutions would also find this book of interest for training their students in CBT.

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Understanding Depression: A Complete Guide to Its Diagnosis and Treatment, 2nd ed.

by Donald F. Klein, M.D., and Paul H. Wender, M.D.
Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y., 2005, 207 pages,
\$13.95 (paperback).

This book is written for laypeople who want to understand mood disorders from a biological perspective. It could also be used by primary care physicians for purposes of patient education. This is the second edition; the first was published in 1993.¹

Both of the authors are pioneers in biological psychiatry. Dr. Klein is an emeritus professor at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Dr. Wender is an emeritus professor at the University of Utah School of Medicine and a lecturer at Harvard Medical School.

The book contains chapters on recognizing depression (with a helpful self-rating questionnaire), distinguishing depression from bipolar mood disorders, causes of mood disorders, diagnosis and treatment of depression, a brief guide to psychopharmacologic drugs, illnesses related to depression, and how to get help. This is a readable book for laypersons and includes excellent case examples. The information about antidepressants is up-to-date and informative. Psychiatrists and primary care physicians regularly have to contend with public misinformation about antidepressants; the chapter on these medications would go a long way toward properly educating patients about the risks and benefits of these drugs. There are also sections

on sleep aids, antipsychotics, anticonvulsants, and benzodiazepines. Herbal treatments are also addressed.

This publication strongly focuses on the biological model of depression, which has been the authors' lifetime area of study. They have less expertise on non-biological models of treatment, and it shows in this book. Drs. Klein and Wender acknowledge the relationship between biological predisposition and life stress, though they heavily favor medical treatment over psychotherapy. They incorrectly state that there is little evidence that cognitive-behavioral therapy is more effective than placebo in treating depression (page 105). Nor do the authors touch upon lifestyle issues such as maintaining active schedules and exercise. Readers might also get the impression that psychiatrists are the only individuals qualified to treat depression. It is well known, particularly in non-urban settings, that antidepressants are primarily prescribed by primary care physicians.

With the shortcomings aside, I would recommend this book for any layperson looking for authoritative information about the biology of mood disorders.

REFERENCE

1. Klein DF, Wender PH. *Understanding Depression: A Complete Guide to Its Diagnosis and Treatment*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 1993

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