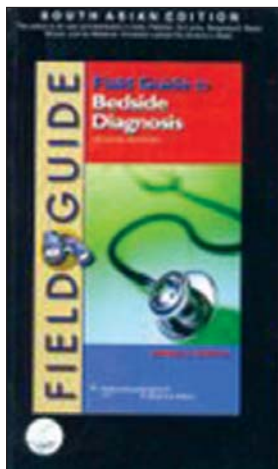


Book Reviews

Field Guide to Bedside Diagnosis. Second edition. D. S. Smith. Wolters Kluwer Health, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, New Delhi, 2008. 416 pp, price not mentioned. ISBN 13: 978-81-8473-113-2.



With the advent of a plethora of investigations, bedside diagnosis is becoming a dying art in recent times. However, as the past masters have often shown, recognizing the symptoms precisely and eliciting the myriad physical signs at the bedside, and analysing the information obtained is essential for making a correct diagnosis. This book attempts to help the young clinician to begin the approach to differential diagnosis and plan the work-up to arrive at the diagnosis. I found this book to be refreshingly different from the standard textbooks on the technique of

physical examination. This book focuses on integrating the information obtained from history and physical examination and helps clinicians to arrive at a working diagnosis.

In this book, 139 symptoms and signs encountered in routine clinical practice constitute the chapters. Each of these chapters begins with an overview that lists not only the common causes but also the rare and important ones that should not be missed. This is followed by a diagnostic approach where major diagnostic branching points are considered. Another impressive feature of this book is the tables on evidence-based medicine (EBM) which are given in most of the chapters. These tables provide the sensitivity, specificity and likelihood ratio of the diagnostic test. This approach is an approximate objective representation of the intuitive approach that experienced clinicians follow. Subsequently, the salient clinical findings relevant to the diseases considered under differential diagnoses are presented. The author attempts to apply the art of medicine to solve a diagnostic mystery and presents each of these chapters as 'illness scripts' that facilitate mastery of the art of diagnosis, and appears to be largely successful in that attempt. The author rightly cautions that 'clinical diagnosis will seldom outperform diagnostic technology but will certainly facilitate the choice of appropriate diagnostic tests and will enhance their interpretation'.

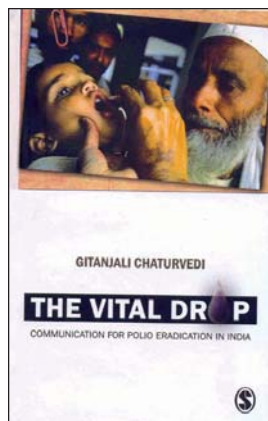
This compact volume is well produced and printed. It contains many useful line diagrams to facilitate the understanding of key concepts. At the end of the book there is an impressive collection of 192 full colour illustrations organized into 80 colour plates. The book also contains a comprehensive index that is helpful. The prose is racy and the clear scientific style will appeal to medical students. The book contains several aphorisms and clinical pearls that reminded me of the classical bedside teaching that was a feature of good medical colleges not so long ago. Here is a vignette: 'The stethoscope allows you to connect not only your ears but also your mind to the patient.'

The book will certainly appeal to medical students in their first clinical year. It will also help postgraduates in internal medicine

and practising physicians to hone their diagnostic reasoning skills. Young physicians starting their career in teaching internal medicine will also find it useful. The authors may consider bringing out a special edition of this book in future, tailoring it to the needs of medical students in tropical countries such as India and incorporating common problems encountered in India such as snake bite, organophosphorus compound poisoning, scorpion sting, among others. The price is not mentioned. I hope that this useful book is reasonably priced to suit the pocket of the Indian medical student.

ALLADI MOHAN
Department of Medicine
Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences
Tirupati
Andhra Pradesh
alladimohan@rediffmail.com

The Vital Drop: Communication for polio eradication in India. Gitanjali Chaturvedi. Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2008. 317 pp, Rs 750. ISBN 13: 978-81-7829-866-5.



The global polio eradication initiative (GPEI) has been one of the largest, most intensive public health campaigns the world has ever seen. When the GPEI was launched, wild poliovirus was endemic in over 125 countries; now there are only sporadic cases of polio in just a handful of countries. India is just two states away from being polio-free. The initiative has been dogged by intellectual and scientific debates, as well as adverse publicity and unexpected delays. The task of communicating the message of eradication to the population has

been complicated by the fact that the strategies are still evolving, and an organism that is proving difficult to eradicate. In the midst of such adversity, the programme has managed to maintain a remarkable report card.

The journey of polio eradication in India has many highlights, not least the stellar role of the evidence-based, responsive communication strategy that has ensured the acceptance of the programme across the country. The communication strategy has been carefully crafted with a strong emphasis on social and epidemiological evidence. The strategy and its development are described elegantly in this book by Gitanjali Chaturvedi, a development professional with a PhD in political science from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The author draws extensively on her experience as a communications consultant for the programme.

The book starts with a discussion of the epidemiology of polio and the historical aspects of the polio eradication initiative. While describing the process of developing a cohesive strategy for communicating the message of polio eradication across the diverse sociocultural milieu of India, the author draws our attention to the three chief challenges—creating awareness about the disease, convincing resistant families of the need for oral polio vaccine, and ensuring continued compliance by families round after round.

The key to polio eradication in India has been reaching resistant population groups in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The account of how underserved communities were reached is compelling. ‘The Bihar story’ is an inspiring example of how innovative means were used to mobilize the population in the face of considerable resistance. Of the several strategies employed, interpersonal communication is probably the best method of conveying critical information to a population which has misgivings. This is exemplified by the success of the Social Mobilization Network (SMNet) across Uttar Pradesh. An entire chapter, complete with illustrations, is devoted to the role of SMNet in reaching people across India’s most populous state.

Engaging the mass media and developing a wide network of community leaders as partners for advocacy are crucial pillars of any communication strategy that targets such a massive population. One chapter dwells on how this partnership was developed and sustained.

While most strategies have been successful, a few have been counterproductive. The book describes some short-sighted strategies that proved to be unsustainable and ineffective. A notable example is the incentive approach, which was treated with suspicion by the community. The several course corrections undertaken to make the communication interventions more effective have been well documented. The text is interspersed with quotes from many prominent figures involved in the movement, as well as notes from the author’s diary. These add colour to the book.

The book does not attempt to critically review the communication strategy. It is, instead, an insider’s record of the evolution, implementation and results of the strategy, and the programme itself. The debate on injectable polio vaccine as a key instrument in the polio eradication campaign and the growing skepticism among the medical fraternity regarding the eradication of the virus have not been addressed adequately. A large body of healthcare workers has been involved in the implementation of the polio programme, and communicating the strategy to them, as well as keeping their motivation and commitment alive for such a long period of time, is bound to have been a herculean task. The book barely touches upon how this was achieved, and is equally silent on how dissenting voices were handled. The debates on the polio eradication strategy have been sidelined in favour of the means by which the masses were reached.

For the polio eradication programme to achieve its stated goals, there was a need for an unwavering focus on the immediate goal of getting polio drops out to the entire community. Polio eradication appears to have been reduced to repeated pulsing of children under five years of age with oral polio vaccine. The overall strategy did not do much to communicate the need for safe water and sanitation, and did not emphasize the importance of equitable access to healthcare. This approach appears dogmatic and short-sighted to those not directly involved in the programme. The chapter, ‘Setting the stage for polio eradication in India’, seems to echo this perspective by describing the most important public health interventions as ‘add-on strategies’, as bells and

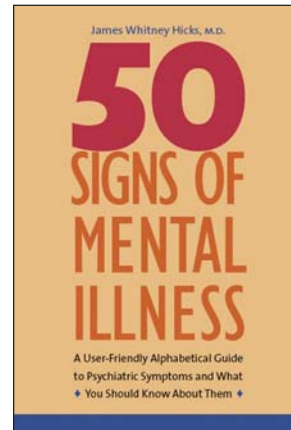
whistles to gain the community’s acceptance of the programme. A less significant drawback is that the book at times focuses excessively on operational details and uses many abbreviations, making the subject appear far more technical than it really is.

This well-compiled text, accompanied by more than 40 figures and illustrations, as well as an extensive bibliography, has been attractively packaged by the publishers. While the level of detail and pricing will deter many casual readers, those who want to study the strategy will benefit from the author’s well-researched account of how communication initiatives were developed for this large project. The book meets the hitherto unaddressed need for such documentation. It also provides valuable suggestions on how to avoid the common pitfalls encountered while developing such a strategy and should give public health personnel an insight into the complexity of the exercise. This book would make compelling reading for all those interested in public health and those following the polio initiative across the globe, and should find a place in every public health library.

T. JACOB JOHN

*Department of Community Health
Christian Medical College
Vellore
Tamil Nadu
jebu@cmcvellore.ac.in*

50 Signs of Mental Illness. James Whitney Hicks. Byword Books, New Delhi, 2008. 389 pp, Rs 475. ISBN 13: 978–81–8193–043–9.



Globally, mental disorders inflict tremendous morbidity, mortality and impairment. Even though there has been an upsurge in effective treatment options over the past 50 years, treatment-seeking is still low and many patients remain untreated.¹ Barriers to treatment include failure to seek help because the problem is not acknowledged, perceiving that treatment is not effective, believing that the problem will go away by itself, and desiring to deal with the problem without outside help. In

addition, there is inadequate knowledge among the general public about what constitutes mental disorders, how to recognize them and whether they are treatable. This makes mental illnesses cryptic phenomena, further adding to the stigma and low treatment-seeking.^{2,3} Early recognition and treatment-seeking may thus decrease the associated morbidity and mortality. A self-help approach can be a valuable resource as patients can use it independently to address mental health issues. It has been hypothesized that self-help approaches generate a greater sense of self-efficacy than more directive care, as patients work through problems on their own.⁴ This book is a step in this direction.

The author, a psychiatrist, has come up with this self-help book for psychiatric patients as well as for their caregivers. This book is an innovative attempt in that the author has described signs and symptoms of mental illness instead of describing individual psychiatric diagnoses. It proceeds in a retrospective manner, from the description of the symptoms towards various possible conditions in which these symptoms can be found. The book demonstrates the author's clinical expertise along with his admirable literary skills.

Written in a lucid language, the book has been organized into 50 chapters which have been alphabetically arranged. Each chapter is devoted to a symptom or a sign. The book covers a wide range of symptoms that are commonly encountered in mental illness such as anger, antisocial behaviour, appetite disturbance, body image problems, compulsions, delusion, depression, dissociation, grief, hallucination, impulsiveness, intoxication, mood swings, movement problems, obsession, etc. to name a few.

Each chapter starts with an eloquent and captivating brief clinical vignette of a symptom. Further, each chapter goes on to describe and discuss the causes of the symptoms. For example, in the chapter on body image problem, the author says that 'many of the rituals and preoccupations seen in body dysmorphic disorder are remarkably similar to those seen in obsessive-compulsive disorder ... body image preoccupations are a feature of several other illnesses'. The author then describes the conditions—anorexia nervosa, hypochondriasis-somatization, depression which could be associated with body image disturbance in separate paragraphs. The author also says that 'dissatisfaction with your appearance or body is not always a sign of mental illness', indicating that just the presence of one symptom may not warrant a diagnosis and can be normal or stress-induced. Similar to the above example, each chapter has an insightful description of symptoms and the associated disorders. Each chapter also contains italicized words which can be referred to at other places in the book. The chapter further guides the reader on how to cope with the problem, when one should seek treatment and outlines the available treatment options including pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment modalities.

The book also contains an index at the end which is helpful in quickly referring to any topic. For readers interested in further exploration of any topic, there is an appendix which lists comprehensive references including organizations (in the United States of America, Europe and Australia, hotlines, websites and books). The book is written mostly in the second person in a friendly tone giving the readers an impression that somebody is talking to them.

However, there are certain shortcomings. The author does not differentiate adequately between a symptom and a sign, though for lay readers both the terms may mean the same thing. The book lacks any illustrations, pictures or diagrams which, if added, would have made the book more visually appealing. Certain symptoms do not warrant a separate chapter and could have been discussed along with other symptoms, e.g. fear and panic; grief

and depression; euphoria and grandiosity; flashbacks and trauma, etc. Certain symptoms are non-specific such as 'nonsense' in which the author aims to discuss irrelevant speech which could also have been taken up in the chapter on speech disorders, 'oddness' in which the author has described odd behaviour, 'denial', which is a defence mechanism and not a symptom. 'Psychosis' has been described in a separate chapter even though it is not a symptom, while there are separate chapters on 'delusion' and 'hallucination' (which indeed are symptoms of psychoses). Likewise, 'mania' and 'depression'—both mood symptoms—have been given separate chapters.

Another major shortcoming is that a few of the symptoms are technical terms which would not be familiar to every reader, e.g. delusion, dissociation, paranoia, grandiosity, hallucination, histrionic, etc. Such terms are best understood only after reading the text. A reader may well understand memory gaps or losing consciousness but may not understand what 'dissociation' means. Similarly, a person may be engaged in repeated hand washing without understanding what an obsession or a compulsion is until he reads the chapter.

The 50 signs that the author has chosen miss certain important areas. Substance use-related issues have not received much attention and have been addressed inadequately in the chapters on 'craving' and 'intoxication'. We feel the term 'addiction' warranted a separate chapter. Yet another example of a missed sign/symptom is 'inattention/concentration problems' which are commonly experienced by patients with psychiatric disorders.

The book is clearly directed towards English-speaking, developed countries and may not appeal much to people of a different sociocultural background (such as in India) mainly because of the case descriptions and the examples that the author gives. It would be difficult for an Indian to relate to the book.

Overall, the strength of the book lies in the simple description of symptoms, the clarity of writing style and the additional information for readers. It is easy to comprehend for non-professionals for whom it is intended.

REFERENCES

- 1 Wang PS, Angermeyer M, Borges G, Bruffaerts R, Tat Chiu W, de Girolamo G, *et al.* Delay and failure in treatment seeking after first onset of mental disorders in the World Health Organization's World Mental Health Survey Initiative. *World Psychiatry* 2007;6:177–85.
- 2 Kohn R, Saxena S, Levav I, Saraceno B. The treatment gap in mental health care. *Bull World Health Organ* 2004;82:858–66.
- 3 Sartorius N. Stigma and mental health. *Lancet* 2007;370:810–11.
- 4 Church E, Cornish P, Callanan T, Bethune C. Integrating self-help materials into mental health practice. *Can Fam Physician* 2008;54:1413–17.

ATUL AMBEKAR

VIJETA KUSHWAHA

Department of Psychiatry and National Drug Dependence

Treatment Centre

All India Institute of Medical Sciences

New Delhi

atul.ambekar@gmail.com