

Book Reviews

LEGAL ISSUES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE. By Barbara A. Weiner and Robert M. Wettstein. New York: Plenum Press, 1993. 403 pp. \$50.00.

Marilyn S. Ward, MD

This book was intended by its authors to be a "practical volume on how the law affects the clinician." It fulfills this purpose very well. It might be compared with Simon's *Clinical Psychiatry and the Law* and Appelbaum and Gutheil's *Clinical Handbook of Psychiatry and the Law*. Unlike these works, however, it is aimed at all mental health professionals, not just psychiatrists.

The book opens with a fairly extensive discussion of the legal system and the attorney's role. Although not of interest to all clinicians, this section does contain information not readily available in comparable books. For example, there is a concise, clear discussion about attorneys' fees. The usual topics of civil commitment, liability, confidentiality, Tarasoff issues, competency, and the role of the expert witness are all covered, and there is a glossary of legal terms at the end. Kathleen M. Quinn, MD is acknowledged as the primary author of the chapter on children. The style and range of this chapter are indistinguishable from the others, however.

Each chapter contains an overview of topics covered, a list of commonly asked questions, and a bibliography. The bibliographies are organized in the same sections as the text and have separate sec-

tions for cases and for articles and books. This is a major strength of the book, as the bibliographies seem to be complete and to cover both the legal and medical literature. Extensive appendices and tables, such as a table summarizing right to refuse medication cases, are provided for certain topics.

Some recommendations might seem unrealistic to clinicians. For example, a section on completing commitment papers advises making specific treatment recommendations on the papers. This could impede the effectiveness of the receiving facility. The description of assessment of dangerousness to self and others is found in more useful formats elsewhere. In general, however, there is a wealth of practical guidance on a variety of subjects. The section on record keeping is excellent and deals concisely with issues such as keeping private notes, documenting telephone calls, and patient access to records. The chapter on competency and guardianship covers these issues more clearly in fewer pages than this writer has seen previously. The authors have chosen not to refer extensively to legal cases in the text, but do so when necessary to explain the historical context or otherwise clarify the topic.

Many topics are covered that are not generally included in books of this type. Regulations concerning research subjects are discussed. The clinician is advised as to when to retain his or her own lawyer. Issues of access of hospitalized patients to mail, telephone, and personal attorneys are all addressed. There are discussions of federal regulations about confidentiality of substance abuse records and of the Education for All Handicapped Children

Act. Expert witness fees are discussed in a forthright manner. There is a useful discussion as to what exactly constitutes a psychiatric emergency.

In summary, this is a complete and useful reference, carefully compiled by distinguished authors. It is written in a readable style and is attractively printed. *Legal Issues in Mental Health Care* is a good value that deserves a place in the mental health clinician's library.

THE MYTH OF REPRESSED MEMORY. By Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketcham. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. 290 pp. \$22.95 (\$29.99 Canadian).

Jeffrey S. Janofsky, MD

Dr. Elizabeth Loftus is a leading experimental psychologist in the field of memory. She, along with Katherine Ketcham (an author of several previous scientifically based texts), has written a gripping book regarding the debate of repressed memory and accusations of child abuse.

The authors conducted hundreds of interviews with accusers, therapists, lawyers, and mental health professionals in order to write this book. The authors have also read thousands of pages of scholarly and popular articles on the subjects of memory, trauma, therapy, and recovery.

This book is not heavy on methodology or hard science, although Dr. Loftus does take some time to review current research in memory and trauma. Instead, the au-

thors have used case and clinical examples to "flesh out" their understanding of how memory works and how the concept of repression has been misunderstood and misused by some mental health providers and child advocates.

The authors emphasize that, despite decades of experimental memory research, there is absolutely no controlled scientific support for the idea that traumatic memories are routinely banished into the unconscious to reliably return years later.

I found *The Myth of Repressed Memory* to be highly readable and understandable. However, Dr. Loftus' method of referencing sources (a list of references at the end of the book with no linking references in the text) made it difficult to connect text with referenced data.

Despite this mild criticism, I would recommend this book highly to forensic psychiatrists and clinicians on both sides of the "false memory" controversy. Dr. Loftus takes a much more balanced view than most clinicians on either side of the controversy.

MALE VIOLENCE. Edited by John Archer. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. 414 pp. \$69.95 hardback, \$19.95 paperback.

Patrick Devitt

As seductive and exciting as the title of this book seems at first glance, reading it

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is really hard work. Our fascination with society's fascination with violence deserves a better and more coherent attempt at satisfaction than this edited volume of contributions by mainly British psychologists.

Never has violence been so newsworthy. Crime, and in particular violent crime, is at the top of the political agenda. Television and tabloids are saturated daily with gruesome details of violence. Society's focus has broadened from the strictly macabre to encompass such topics as domestic violence and the role or vested interest of a patriarchal society in turning a blind eye. There seems to be a hunger out there to make sense of what is regarded as the scourge of our times.

For the public at large and the professionals who deal with violence and its effects, this should have been an interesting and informative work. The problem lies in the heavy, turgid, and excessively academic tone and content of the book. The approach to the topic is ponderous, pedantic, and predictable.

The fact that the perpetrators of most violence are young, disadvantaged males comes as no surprise to the average lay person. Yet this idea is simply flogged to death in chapter after chapter. That one of the main causes of male violence resides in that most fragile of male cargos, the ego, is also commonly understood. That the present male ego has evolved by natural selection to enhance the survival of genetic material is probably not so well known but, although interesting, is seriously belabored throughout the book.

Although the editor obviously went to great pains to present a comprehensive

view of the subject, with 18 different chapters, the overall effect is of a certain sameness and blandness. In fact, the book reads like a collection of earnest, albeit erudite, essays on a given topic from a doctorate-level psychology class.

For those who enjoy the challenge of tedious panning for gold, there are a few nuggets of compensation. There is an excellent chapter on the sociohistorical perspective of warrior values. Another good chapter addresses the issue of power relations and how male, as opposed to female, violence is mainly instrumental—its purpose is to control others rather than to vent anger. On the subject of power, it is a pleasure to see the wise and wily figure of Machiavelli emerge again head and shoulders above more modern commentators.

Less cerebrally, Mike Tyson has a walk-on part in the final chapter, where he is posed as a tragic exemplar of how society's values promote female exploitation.

Two omissions must be noted. First, there is no attempt to analyze the United States' fascination with violence or its notoriety, in the developed world, for violent crime. Also, some discussion of treatment possibilities for the violent offender or psychiatric patient would have been welcome.

The editor had the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the national debate on violence, and in this he failed. This subject would better lend itself to simplified, coherent, single-author treatment.

Male Violence may be of interest to those engaged in research or scholarly activity, but the busy forensic psychiatrist will probably wisely "give it a miss."