

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of *Principles and Practice of Forensic Psychiatry*

REFERENCE: Bluglass, R. and Bowden, P., *Principles and Practice of Forensic Psychiatry*. Churchill Livingstone Inc., 1560 Broadway, New York, NY, 10036, 1990, 1405 pp. plus citations 10 pp., references 84 pp., index 53 pp., \$306.00.

This volume, monumental in scope and size, is excellently conceived, carefully edited, thoroughly indexed, and laden with citations and references. More than 100 British, Commonwealth, Irish, European, and American contributors skillfully present reasonably brief case synopses and their theses.

The only factual error I found was on page 1103, where the author wrote that the Rosenhan study involved psychiatrists "required to diagnose filmed interviews during which they were fed misleading information. The psychiatrists were tricked into incorrect diagnoses. . ." In fact, the famous—or infamous—Rosenhan study [1] did not use filmed interviews but actual clinical contacts of "eight sane people [who] gained secret admission to 12 different hospitals."

I was disappointed to find in this encyclopedic volume areas that seemed omitted or underplayed. Specifically, like most "practice" books in the helping professions, economics is simply an anathema. There is no discussion of how to conduct a private practice. There is no mention, for example, of how a practitioner might start a practice in forensic psychiatry, of how to obtain referrals or handle fee collections, or how to handle the many other mundane concerns of daily clinical practice. Most of these authors appear to practice in institutional settings and may not be exposed to such concerns. As private practitioners, however, many of us deal with them regularly.

On a more profoundly clinical level, less than one page (pp. 1223–1224) is devoted to professional liability, a major concern to almost all clinicians. This casual mention in a practical volume of several-hundred pages simply does not give necessary weight to an important topic.

I found the lack of any reference to religion in the Index especially surprising. These issues are familiar to clinicians, whether practicing forensic or general psychiatry. Most patients are involved in religious practices, and some are active in cults. Omitting or overlooking the forensic aspects of these issues fails to address an important area of psychic life. Moreover, there is notably little discussion of diagnostic psychological testing, except for some references to neuropsychological testing in potentially brain-damaged

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individuals and brief, scattered references to personality testing. Finally, feminism, another subject that can indeed influence our psychiatric duties, is also unmentioned in the Index.

Overall, I found this an excellent book, worthy of inclusion in the library of any practitioner who wants a good, chatty discussion on almost any topic of clinical-forensic-psychiatric concern. It provides an excellent opportunity to delve further into the medical and legal literature. I spent considerably more time interestedly reading this book for review than anticipated, for the discussions were learned and thorough. I highly recommend this volume.

Reference

[1] Rosenhan, D.L., "On Being Sane in Insane Places," *Science*, Vol. 179, 1973, pp. 250-258.