

Psychotic Depression. By Conrad Swartz and Edward Shorter; Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, New York, New York; 2007; ISBN: 978-0-521-87822-7; \$85.00, 327 pp.

This is an interesting book. I read it several times before writing the review and came to the same conclusion about it each time; it is uneven. It starts out as a descriptive text that is truly excellent. The first section on the history of psychotic depression as a concept is well written. The history portion spans some 60 pages. This part of the book is interesting, well referenced and balanced. The next 50 pages deal with the diagnosis of psychotic depression. This portion of the text is also very good and written with remarkable clarity. The diagnosis of this condition is important in the treatment decisions one makes and the devotion of time to this topic is valuable. The next part of the text deals with patient experiences. It carries significant weight in getting the concept of personal suffering in psychotic depression across to the reader. In short, the first part of this book is wonderful. The second half of the book is not as good.

The second half of the book deals with treatment. It starts out with a good chapter on the historical perspective on treatment. This is very interesting and makes good reading. The next portion dealing with treatment pitfalls and pathways falls into a paternalistic review of various opinions on the care of

psychotic depression. From this point on, the book resembles a long unnecessary lecture to *the great unwashed*. Is it possible that so many clinicians are so poorly informed that such reductionistic detail is required? The following appendices are even more loaded with opinion. While there is nothing wrong with opinion when it is correct, a text of this nature requires more substantial references when the author states things so broadly.

The handling of pharmacological treatments for psychotic depression could be expanded and discussed in greater detail. The author mentions numerous treatments, but only spends a few words on many of them. The topic of electroconvulsive therapy is discussed in great detail. Although ECT is usually the treatment of choice for psychotic depression, the omission of detailed discussion of other treatments could give the reader an impression that the treatment section is unevenly written.

The final 60 pages of this book do not match up to the quality of the first 250 pages. This is unfortunate, had the book been uniformly written and layed out, it could have been a magnum opus on psychotic depression. We look forward to an improved edition at a later date. The current one merely sits on my shelf with others.

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