
Book Review

Teaching Psychiatry: Putting Theory into Practice

Editors: Linda Gask, Bülent Coşkun and David Baron
Wiley-Blackwell, 2011

“Teaching Psychiatry: Putting Theory into Practice” is a book that discusses every aspect of psychiatric education. The book, one of the editors of which is Professor Bülent Coşkun, a distinguished colleague, addresses the issue of how to teach psychiatry at different levels, including medical school students, psychiatry residents and primary care physicians. It also addresses problems of psychiatric education and their solutions, as well as implications that need to be either changed or developed.

As Michele Pato emphasizes in the introduction, the word “doctor” comes from the Latin root “docere” which means “to teach” rather than “to diagnose” or “to treat”. Throughout their professional lives, psychiatrists are responsible for educating, not only their students or residents, but also their patients, patients’ family members, the broader society and themselves. This book searches for answers to the question of how psychiatrists should carry out such responsibilities, rather than to the question of what to teach in the course of delivering psychiatric education.

In the first chapter of the book, the editors emphasize that education is not just about transfer of knowledge and that it is a process during which emotional and behavioral aspects play an important role. This is a time when psychiatry is in crisis and it is really meaningful and necessary to understand how and why medical students choose psychiatry as a medical specialty, in order to set out suitable conditions for students to choose it. The World Health Organization suggests that there should be a ratio of 1 psychiatrist to every 10000 (ten thousand) people. Today, for over a half of the world’s population, there is even less than 1 psychiatrist for every hundred thousand people (%47.6 of 192 countries).

The subject of “stigma” emerges in retrospective studies that examine those times when psychiatry was less or more popular than at present. The importance of education is once again emphasized in order to overcome prejudices about psychiatry. It is argued that the main determinants for overcoming these prejudices are; the educational atmosphere, the importance given to education and the presence of interactive/active educators. Ways to develop curricula for the psychiatric education of medical school students and residents are discussed in two different chapters of the book. Another chapter is dedicated to the importance and methods of evaluation of education in psychiatry.

How can we teach behavioral science to medical school students in an interesting and efficient way? How can we use “problem-based learning”, or new medical “technology” in residency training? How can we teach basic interviewing skills and more advanced skills required for psychotherapy? All of these questions are being answered in a different chapter of the book.

There is a table of recommendations, in the related section, for adversities/ difficulties regarding how to teach as well as when and who should be responsible for teaching behavioral sciences. It is emphasized that integrating different disciplines (psychology, sociology, genetics, neuroscience, etc.) into psychiatric education requires special cooperation and communication. It is also emphasized that it is very important to connect, or even synchronize, theoretical knowledge with clinical skills.

In the seventh section, it is argued that programs for psychiatric education should have a cyclic nature through the inclusion of phases such as “program development”, “program evaluation” and “determining areas that need to be improved”. Model samples are provided for the psychopharmacology and psychotherapy curriculum. There are sections in the book that examine the topics of education for basic interviewing skills and teaching psychotherapy through supervision and case studies. These topics are examined thoroughly

since the importance and priority of patient-doctor relationships and psychotherapy are mentioned throughout the book. Similarly, it is argued that developing cultural sensibility is an important issue that should be included in psychiatric education.

In the section titled “Technology for Psychiatry Educators”, useful contemporary tools and procedures are listed, as well as online sources that address psychiatric education. The last section of the book is titled “The Psychiatrist as an Educator”. This section provides valid and interesting information for all psychiatrists who have to serve as both doctors and educators in relation to their patients and their family members.

The last chapter co-authored by David Baron and Bülent Coşkun, emphasizes the importance of educating the educa-

tors. According to the authors medical students, psychiatry residents, other medical professionals and primary care physicians should receive special training for becoming educators. There is a table that summarizes what and how to do to meet this endeavor and by which means and criteria to assess the consequences of this type of special “educator’s education”.

This book deserves our attention since it covers a very important topic and sheds light on common predicaments of our profession. There are summary tables in each section, which makes it an easy and interesting book to read. This is a bedside book for every psychiatrist who is responsible for educating others, particularly for the ones working in academic settings and training hospitals. .

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