

Book Review

**Sims' Symptoms in the Mind (5th edition)
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Book : SIM'S SYMPTOMS IN THE MIND Textbook of Descriptive Psychopathology (Femi Oyeboode [Ed]) ; Saunders Elsevier, 2015; 5thedition; Paperback; 388 + vii pp.

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INTRODUCTION

There are quite a few books written on descriptive psychopathology till date. Descriptive psychopathology is age old concept, it is considered as foundation stone for the practice of clinical psychiatry. This consists of observation and description of abnormal subjective phenomena and behaviors related to signs and symptoms in various psychiatric illnesses. Descriptive psychopathology provides avenue for better understanding and explanations for psychopathology. By applying the knowledge of this clinician and students of psychiatry could have more empathy and understanding about patients suffering. Phenomenology is a distinct feature in descriptive psychopathology and it involves elicitation and description of abnormal psychological events, subjective experiences of the patient and consequent behavior. It is very rare to come across books that encompass theories and phenomenon explaining the psychopathology with focus on assessment and explanations about consciousness, cognition and awareness of reality, expressions of emotions as well as variations in human personality in such a simple language that readers are able to follow what has been mentioned.

THE PRESENT BOOK

This book consists of 7 sections which include 20 well written chapters that enlighten the readers about various symptoms and signs related to mental illness. This entire book focuses on descriptive psychopathology and enables the readers to understand the complex concepts of psychopathology and assessment of these phenomena in individual patients. First edition of this book was published in 1988 and became leading textbook on clinical psychopathology. Author had modified few chapters in this fifth edition, such as changes in chapters on disturbance of memory, disorder of time, pathology of perception, disorder of speech and language, affect and emotional disorders.

SECTION ONE

Section one is titled as Concepts and Method, which includes two chapters. Chapter one focuses on fundamental concepts of descriptive psychopathology;

such as definition of psychopathology, difference between descriptive and psychoanalytic psychopathology, meaning of phenomenology related to psychopathology with focus on empathy and understanding of patient's experiences. It had described the key concepts of disease and illness, norms, normal and abnormal related to human behavior. Author also differentiated terms understanding vs. explanation; related to patients subjective experiences. Various concepts such as form and content of phenomenology, primary and secondary phenomena, subjectivity and objectivity of psychopathology as well as organic substrates and mind-body duality related to psychopathology are very aptly explained in this chapter.

Chapter two encompasses on how to elicit the symptoms of mental illness, with entire focus on psychiatric history taking including assessment of premorbid personality and mental status examination. Entire outline for psychiatric examination is tabulated in this chapter. In the end it had very well illustrated about communication skills techniques which is considered as backbone of psychiatric assessment.

SECTION TWO

Section two explains about consciousness and cognitive functions of brain in which chapter three covers concept of consciousness and various pathology of consciousness. Chapter four comprises of understanding about attention, concentration and orientation as well as alterations in this key functions of brain. Author also mentioned in brief about sleep disorders and how phenomenology views dreams. Chapter five is written on very important cognitive functioning i.e. memory with brief review about mechanisms of memory. This chapter very well explained organic and psychogenic disturbances of memory. Various thought-provoking phenomena such as déjà vu, confabulation, selective forgetting, falsification, Ganser state are aptly explained.

SECTION THREE

Section three titled as Awareness of reality: time, perception and judgment; this section included total six chapters. Chapter six speaks about concept of time in relation to psychiatry and disorders of time. Author also elaborated about biological rhythms and their relation to psychiatry.

Chapter seven consists of concept of sensation and perception and numerous abnormalities associated with perception. Further in this chapter author meticulously explained the terms such as sensory distortions and false perceptions in relation to all five human senses. The concepts of illusions and hallucinations are properly illustrated with numerous clinical examples. Author tried to explain the phenomenon of pseudohallucinations and abnormal imagery as well as various other abnormalities of perception such as autoscopy, extracampine hallucination, reflex hallucination, functional hallucination, hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations.

Chapter eight deals with important concept of delusion and erroneous ideas, in which the meaning as well as definitions of delusion is precisely elaborated. Further the concept of primary and secondary delusions with appropriate examples are explained. Jaspers four types of primary delusions such as autochthonous delusion, delusional percept, delusional atmosphere and delusional memory are intensely explored. Author made effort to illustrate the formation of delusion by focusing on various theories by esteemed psychologist in past era. The content of delusions has been

individually elucidated with multitude of examples. The key concept of overvalued idea has been separately mentioned along with its relation to various psychiatric disorders.

Chapter nine is concerned with disorder of the thinking process; in this various types of thinking such as fantasy thinking, imaginative thinking and rational thinking is described. Author also focused on Processes of disordered thinking such as flight of ideas, circumstantiality, disturbance of flow of thought, thought blocking and so on are elaborated by diagrammatic representation. Disorder of control of thinking are explained with emphasis on examples of first rank symptoms of schizophrenia and its equivalent symptoms from present state examination.

Chapter ten speaks about disorder of speech and language, in which various speech disturbances, organic disorders of language i.e. aphasia and schizophrenic language disorder are illustrated in detail. Chapter eleven elaborated the vital concept of insight, which broadly means self-awareness about own illness and necessity to take treatment. Author illustrated that how this concept is important in clinical psychiatry and how it can alter the prognosis of illness, as well as scales to measure insight. In the end, author focused on relation of insight and cognitive impairment.

SECTION FOUR

Section four titled as Self and Body, and consist of four chapters on disordered self, depersonalization, disorder of awareness of body and psychopathology of pain respectively.

Chapter twelve speaks about the disordered self; in this chapter author described the concept of self which have characteristics of ego vitality, ego activity, unity of self over time, self-identity and boundary of self. It has been postulated that various psychiatric disorders are associated with impairment of self and ego. Chapter thirteen deals with definition and description of depersonalization, various components of depersonalization and theories of depersonalization. Chapter fourteen focused on various disorders of the awareness of the body and their classification. In this chapter author illustrated that how this kind of disorders such as hypochondriasis, conversion, body dysmorphic disorder, transsexualism, anorexia nervosa, phantom limb phenomenon and various culture bound disorders of body image are evolved and their psychological explanations. Chapter fifteen speaks about psychopathology of pain. In this chapter it has been postulated that pain is often hypothesized as mood state while in various psychiatric disorders pain could present as heightened, diminished or associated with absence of identifiable cause.

SECTION FIVE

Section five is dealt with elaboration of emotions and action, consisting of three chapters on affect and emotional disorders, chapter on anxiety, panic, irritability, phobia and obsession, disorders on volition and execution.

Chapter sixteen illustrates affect and emotional disorders with explanation of various terms like mood, affect and emotion. Theories of emotions are discussed in brief and classification of disorders of emotion has been presented in this chapter. Key terminologies such as anhedonia, melancholia, mania, ecstasy, parathymia, alexithymia, blunting of affect, grief, suicidal thoughts are elucidated with examples and

notations from historical behavioral scientists. Chapter seventeen is about response to stress which ranges from free floating anxiety to phobia, panic or obsessive compulsive phenomena. The concept of anxiety and its symptoms are described. The three dimensional model of anxiety symptoms is well conceptualized and presented in this chapter. Phobic neurosis is explained with examples with special mention of specific phobias and social phobia. Interesting phenomenology of obsession and compulsion is well described by author for proper understanding of readers.

Chapter eighteen describes in detail about disorders of volition and execution. The concept of urge, drive, instinct, will and motivation and their inter relationship is meticulously explained. The abnormalities of need drive, motivation and will are described and their alteration in various psychiatric illness is tabulated. Impulsive and aggressive behavior and associated psychopathology has been elaborated in detail with few examples. Behavioral and movement disturbances have crucial diagnostic significance and these are elaborated in depth with focus on signs of catatonia, motor disorders in schizophrenia and brain disease, and extrapyramidal side effects of antipsychotics.

SECTION SIX

Section six contains chapter nineteen which speaks about expression of disordered personality. In this chapter different definitions are poised for better understanding of the term personality. Author had mentioned the difference in understanding of personality traits and personality disorder. In the end the classification of personality disorder as per ICD and DSM system has been charted along with description of each personality disorder in detail.

SECTION SEVEN

Section seven contains chapter twenty which focuses on psychopathology and diagnosis. This chapter mentioned the classification of mental illness as per symptomatology such as psychoses and neuroses. It has been postulated that diagnosis allows the naming, defining and identification of psychopathology. The knowledge of descriptive psychopathology could be applied for enhanced communication, diagnosis, therapy and legislation allied with psychiatric illness. Author has concluded in the end that there is need for research in the field of phenomenology and descriptive psychopathology.

At the end of the book, there are two self-assessment exercises for the readers to brush up their knowledge and to evaluate what they had understood after reading the entire book. These self-assessment exercises are very innovative and important part of this book.

CERTAIN OTHER CRITICAL COMMENTS

The book has been edited by renowned authority in the field of psychiatry who is working as Professor of Psychiatry at esteemed University of Birmingham, National Centre for Mental Health. This book has incorporated the advances related to cognitive neuroscience and neuropsychology, changing classification systems and evolving cultural characteristic of psychiatry. In this recent edition, the author had introduced the video clips and podcasts to illustrate complex ideas using audiovisual method. Another distinctive feature of this book is that there is ample use of figures,

tables and explanatory case examples. Author also added case examples from classical literature, autobiographical narratives and fiction. This book should be considered and recommended as standard textbook for descriptive psychopathology for all the mental health trainees. This book should not be read on a go but requires utmost attention, concentration and dedication on reader's part for better understanding of the concepts of psychiatry. It is also recommended that the book should be read chapter wise and self-assessment exercises should be solved after each chapter in order to retain the volatile concepts mentioned in this book.

WHO SHOULD READ IT

This book is considered as essential not only for psychiatry residents but also for clinical psychiatrist, psychologists, allied mental health professionals and researchers in this field. This book is outstanding and must be an integral part of bookshelf of each individual who is interested in mental health as well as those who are already working as mental health experts.

BOOK RATING

I will rate the book 4.5 out of 5