Depressive Disorders

WPA Series

Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry

Third Edition

Editors:

Helen Herrman
University of Melbourne, Australia

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Depressive Disorders

Third Edition
World Psychiatric Association Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry Series

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Foreword

The World Psychiatric Association’s series ‘Evidence and Experience in Psychiatry’, initiated about 10 years ago by Mario Maj and Norman Sartorius, aims to bridge the gaps in knowledge both within psychiatry and between psychiatry and the rest of medicine. Furthermore, the scope is to increase the applicability of research findings to clinical practice.

Each volume deals with one of the main mental disorders and consists of chapters that review the pertinent literature on major clinical aspects of the given disorder. Each extensive and comprehensive review is followed by several experts on the field providing critical remarks and insights from the perspective of their own knowledge and experience. These commentators come from different countries and cultural backgrounds and are associated with a range of different schools of thought.

One distinctive and novel feature characterising each chapter conceived by the editors and retained throughout the successive volumes of the series is that the authors of the reviews conclude by listing the findings they consider as consistent and inconsistent and by identifying areas open to further research. This means that the authors have to scrutinise and critically evaluate the available research findings and weigh their relevance to clinical practice.

The first volume of the series, published in 1999, was on depressive disorders. These disorders have significant consequences for the afflicted individual in terms of emotional suffering and cognitive and social functioning. They also constitute a major public health problem: epidemiological evidence indicates that they are becoming more common and the World Health Organization predicts that in about 10 years from now they will be second among all clinical disorders in terms of burden of disease.

The first edition of Depressive Disorders covered extensively and comprehensively the most crucial and clinically relevant aspects of depression – its diagnosis; pharmacological treatments; psychotherapies; effects in children, adolescents and the elderly; and its costs. In all chapters, in addition to the thorough literature review, the authors and commentators examined and amplified the existing information with their own complementary views and critical remarks, thus enabling disputed issues to be touched upon and conflicting views to be raised to stimulate further investigation.

A second edition was published in less than three years, attesting to the great interest that the first volume aroused, as reflected in its wide readership.

Now we have in hand this revised third edition that combines change and continuity in a masterful way.

The editorship has been enlarged to include Helen Herrman. The content has undergone considerable changes. The chapter on costs in the first two editions is replaced by a chapter on depressive disorders in primary care. This change corresponds to the increased significance attached to primary health services, not only as a referral filter but also as an