

Book Reviews

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER: DIAGNOSIS, TREATMENT AND LEGAL ISSUES. By C. B. Scignar. New York: Praeger Press, 1984. 288 pp. \$32.95.

Reviewed by Helen L. Morrison, MD

Scignar prefaces this volume by stating that his personal experience during the past 20 years has led him to write this book. He clarifies that his focus for this volume followed his personal experience of the difficulties in treating patients who were traumatized, utilizing tools learned in "personal analysis and training in psychodynamics." The application of behavioral concepts in the treatment of patients with diagnosis of traumatic neurosis were noted by the author to be "superior to those from treatment methods I formerly employed." He provides a brief historical perspective, including psychoanalytic, physiologic, and behavioral perspectives. Scignar demonstrates the use of questionnaires related to various sources of stress and anxiety reactions. He concludes the "effect of a trauma upon a person's autonomic nervous system determines whether or not a post-traumatic stress disorder develops." Scignar continues and suggests "that a predisposition to a PTSD may result from genetic influence, similar in many respects to predisposition in persons suffering from an anxiety disorder." He explains his techniques in the therapeutic interventions applied to his patient group. These techniques are behavioral in character, with additions of changes in exercise, nutrition, and group treatment. A brief chapter is devoted to legal issues, with presentations describing both defense and plaintiff viewpoints. In addition, a section is related to criminal law. Prevention is briefly addressed. Several case histories are presented. There is a brief foray into the issue of posttraumatic stress disorder in the insanity defense.

THE FITNESS INTERVIEW TEST: A METHOD FOR EXAMINING FITNESS TO STAND TRIAL. By R. Roesch, C. D. Webster, and D. Eaves. Toronto: The University of Toronto, 1984. x + 84 pp. \$4.50.

Reviewed by J. Reid Meloy, PhD

The intent of the fitness interview test (FIT) is to adapt and extend the McGarry Competency Assessment Instrument, developed at the Harvard Laboratory of Community Psychiatry in 1973, for use in Canadian forensic

settings. The FIT contains 28 items, each rated on a six-point "degree of incapacity" scale. They address both legal and mental status issues, such as item 6, "capacity to disclose to lawyer pertinent facts surrounding the alleged offense," and item 25, "intrusion of delusions." This monograph also includes two studies that measure the reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability study used psychiatrists, attorneys, social workers, and psychiatric nurses to rate eight video-taped interviews of patient-defendants. Good overall agreement was found with respect to fitness, but the possibility of a high false positive rate suggested that future evaluators should carefully question their determinations of fitness to stand trial.

The second study measured concurrent validity by comparing the competency findings of two independent raters using the FIT with forensic psychiatrists in the Metropolitan Toronto Forensic Service. After evaluating 270 patient-defendants, the two raters were in 83 percent agreement and were in "highly significant accord" with the psychiatrists. The probability of being found incompetent increased if the defendant was unemployed at the time of arrest, was living on welfare, and had a history of psychiatric disorder. Factor analysis of the FIT statistically confirmed the obvious: the one factor that accounted for 70 percent of the variance was the defendant's comprehension of the court process. The monograph concludes with a training manual for the FIT.

The importance of this monograph is its place within the growing body of substantial research by Drs. Ronald Roesch and Stephen Golding. Their current work on the interdisciplinary fitness interview, a model competency assessment instrument that is more ambitious in scope than the FIT, will most likely play a major role in standardizing the assessment of competency to stand trial in the United States. Interested readers are referred to *Law and Human Behavior*, 8, 3/4, 1984, for an article on its conceptualization and design.

LAW, PSYCHIATRY, AND MORALITY. By Alan A. Stone. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1984. xiv + 277 pp. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Helen L. Morrison, MD

Whether or not one agrees with the points of view expounded by Stone, this collection of essays from previously presented essays, including the not forgotten presentation at the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law Meetings in New York, entitled "The Ethics of Forensic Psychiatry: A View