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978-0-521-53497-0 - Parental Psychiatric Disorder: Distressed Parents and their Families, Second Edition
Edited by Michael Gopfert, Jeni Webster and Mary V. Seeman

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Parental Psychiatric Disorder

Distressed Parents and Their Families

Second Edition

‘A unique and innovative approach to family issues in psychiatric disorders. The authors tackle a broad range of complex issues that are rarely covered in the depth or with the expertise that this volume brings. This book is a major contribution to the field and provides the kind of international perspective that enhances our understanding of the complex dimensions of psychiatric disorders from a multigenerational and cross-cultural perspective.’

From a review of the first edition by Carol Nadelson,
Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School.

It is indisputable that mental illness in a parent has serious and often adverse effects on the child, something which is surprisingly not reflected in clinical service provision. In this completely rewritten new edition, an international, multidisciplinary team of professionals review the most up-to-date treatment interventions from a practical, clinical point of view. It is essential reading for all professionals dealing with adult mental illness and child-care.

Michael Göpfert has pioneered integrative therapeutic psychotherapy services in Liverpool and recently has been involved in setting up treatment services for people with difficult-to-treat personality disorders.

Jeni Webster was based at the University of Manchester before becoming a family therapist in an adult mental health setting.

Mary Seeman is Professor Emerita at the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto based at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. In 2001 she received the Golden Award of the Canadian Psychiatric Association for her lifetime contribution to the advancement of psychiatric research in Canada.

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SECOND EDITION

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To the memory of

Channi Kumar

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Foreword

Graham Thornicroft

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The joys of parents are secret, and so are their griefs and fears.

Francis Bacon (1625) *Essays. Of Parents and Children.*

This thoroughly revised second edition of *Parental Psychiatric Disorder*, following on so soon upon the heels of the first edition, shows both how important this book has become and how rapidly the field is changing. The first edition broke new ground by presenting a coherent range of contributions across the spectrum from primary research, through policy to clinical practice. The new edition takes the field a measured step further. One measure of the rapid maturation of this area is that discussion of the complex interactions between mentally ill parents and their families is now entering mainstream clinical practice in many countries. Until recently, at least in many adult services, the dominant mental health paradigm focused primarily upon the *individual* treatment offered by a clinician to a patient. The importance of this paradigm shift, towards seeing unwell parents in relation to their immediate and their wider family contexts, is of fundamental importance.

This more complex perspective necessarily means that many aspects of the conventional treatment approach have to be revised or completely rethought. A family-context perspective means less certainty for staff who will now need to take into account simultaneously many points of view. Such complexities include, for example (as this splendid volume clearly demonstrates) the need to balance the interests of the child and each of the parents. This focus upon unmet needs of families is especially important now, at a time when, in some economically developed countries, there is a wider cultural shift towards risk avoidance, and it is necessary to recognize that professional abilities to predict harmful activities, for example by parents towards their children, are imprecise at best.

The epidemiological context to this field is also of major importance. As several chapters show, the lifetime prevalence of mental disorders is such that in many cultures children are now more likely than not to live with a parent undergoing a period of mental illness at some time during their upbringing. The increasing rates

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of separation, and divorce are likely to make such exposure even more probable in the foreseeable future. Parental mental illness therefore poses a very substantial public health challenge to many communities. Given this, it is surprising that there is relatively little high-quality research addressing aetiology, prevention and treatment from a family perspective. This volume summarizes much of the published scientific investigations. Thus far, the social, psychological and psychotherapeutic traditions have only just begun to join forces with genetic and epidemiologic investigators, in order to bring the full rigour of a truly multidisciplinary approach to this field. Such an approach will lead to an understanding of the complex chains of causation of mental illness and distress among mentally ill parents, their children and their shared families. At the same time there is a need to apply the highest possible scientific standards to intervention studies for and with such families, including the use of randomized controlled trials more often in future.

This book presents a balanced, humane and expert source of knowledge. Tough issues are addressed head on: including complex ethical and legal issues, alongside a clear emphasis upon what has been learned from clinical practice, using vignettes and case histories to carefully illustrate the key points. The question of what does 'family' mean in times of separated and reconstituted relationships is addressed, as is the difficult area of blame (children blaming themselves, and also parents blaming themselves, for parental mental illness), a form of internalized stigma. From the many expert contributions in this volume, the second edition of this rich repository can only serve to advance our knowledge and practice in relation to parental psychiatric disorder.

Preface

Being asked to provide a second edition of 'Parental Psychiatric Disorder' meant that the initial edition had filled a perceived gap. We were pleased and caught by surprise by the response to the first edition, each of us now in new places and stages of life and career. We had moved on and so had the field. Like the previous edition, but perhaps more clearly so, the volume focuses on the parent with a psychiatric disorder while keeping in mind that the best interests of the child must be considered paramount, if service systems are to work coherently, so that child and adult services complement one another. This edition is completely rewritten bar one chapter by Roberts (Chapter 20), which because of its seminal value, was retained unchanged. Two other chapters (Hall, Chapter 3; Velleman, Chapter 13) were retained but revised and updated. The rest of the chapters are either completely rewritten, or are new, representing the changes in thinking, knowledge and service developments that have taken place since 1995. We made a conscious editorial decision not to republish material where no major change had occurred (e.g. eating disorders, psychosomatic disorders, learning disability). The first edition remains available as a resource and is referenced extensively in this volume.

Our own interests have made us more aware of some developments focusing on personality-disordered parents and their children. We therefore commissioned a new chapter (Adshead *et al.*, Chapter 15) and asked previous contributors to focus their rewritten chapter on personality-disordered parents and their families (Asen and Schuff, Chapter 10). Similarly, we felt that the voice of parents was not present enough in the literature. We therefore commissioned a chapter by Clare Mahoney (Chapter 23), and Vicky Cowling kindly agreed to collect data for the compilation of a chapter that could represent the voice of parents (Chapter 25).

Perhaps the most striking differences in this edition will be in the development of family-sensitive services in so many different countries. Some of these have had a major impact on the delivery of mental health services to women (e.g. Cowling, Chapter 25), or for women with specific disorders. Of course our own thinking and our work has developed further and this is reflected in a number of contributions.

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It is difficult to summarize and convey the experience accumulated over decades of work with families and their mentally ill parents. Since the first edition, the literature and efforts in providing services for mentally ill and disordered parents and their families has expanded considerably and become much more diverse. This is reflected in the content of this edition although we are aware that we have omitted some important service developments (e.g. in Sweden and Holland), and other work in progress.

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Bertram Cohler in Chicago, and Tara Weeramanthri in London, UK, have significantly helped to shape the current edition with advice and support. The other person without whom this book would not have been put together is Jenny Davenport at Webb House in Crewe, UK, who provided a stable centre of administrative solidity in the midst of our professional turbulence. Of course our families have had to share the burden of writing to varying degrees, and one of our children's birthday wish was that the book should be finished before their birthday! We therefore want to acknowledge Jayne Webster and Renée Webster Zempt, grandsons Ahron, Geoffrey and Ciara Seeman, the late Erna Nelki (Oma, mother and mother-in-law), and Anya, Max and Leo Göpfert. Our colleagues at times have also had to put up with the additional stress that editorial and writing work engenders, especially for full-time clinicians with little or no dedicated time to give to such tasks. The developments in our professional thinking come from many sources – our own family experiences, work with colleagues and friends, and the many families with whom we have worked.