



review

Injecting Illicit Drugs

Richard Pates, Andrew McBride & Karin Arnold (eds)
Oxford: Blackwell, 2005,
£35.00 pb, 200 pp.
ISBN: 1-4051-1360-X

The use of illicit substances is a subject that generates considerable interest in both the general and medical media. The act of injecting is one of the core features of the 'junkie' in the minds of the general public, and has been popularised (and to some extent glamorised) by films such as *Trainspotting*. In the 1980s the association between injecting and the spread of HIV was the stimulus for increased interest in harm reduction strategies in the UK, and the impetus for an increase in funding for drug treatment services. Latterly, injecting has been discussed in the context of a rise in drug-related deaths, and there has been interest in providing injecting rooms as a harm reduction measure.

Users of illicit substances have a complex relationship with injecting as a form of drug administration. There is huge variability between the prevalence of injecting within the UK itself, with about half of the heroin users in London utilising this route compared with about a fifth in Birmingham. The pathway to injecting is not a straightforward one for many users, and is influenced by a complex mix of cultural pressures, market forces, physical health and psychological factors. The latter includes the user's self-perception or sense of engagement in the drug scene, and the process may require a desensitisation to the process of injecting.

This interesting and varied book is therefore timely, particularly as the editors believe that it is 'the first book ever compiled that focuses specifically on injecting drug use and the health consequences of this behaviour'. It gathers together the work of experts from a variety of backgrounds, and in doing so

avoids presenting an overly medical focus on the subject. The book goes beyond the standard issues such as the spread of blood-borne viruses and the risk of overdose, and highlights historical, ethnographic and sociological perspectives on injecting. It accepts that 'injectors' are a heterogeneous group, and brings out the unique aspects of particular groups such as women and those in prison. Practical information is distilled from a large literature on safer injecting and individual harm reduction advice, and the issue of 'needle fixation' is comprehensively covered. The book ends with an interesting user perspective. It is a readable and informative book that will benefit anyone with an interest in public health or the treatment of drug misuse problems.

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miscellany

Medical Justice (<http://www.medicaljustice.org.uk>) is a network of ex-detainees, doctors and other experts which campaigns to protect the medical rights of asylum seekers, particularly those in detention. Mental health problems, particularly depression and

post-traumatic stress disorder, are extremely common in such people. Medical Justice needs psychiatrists to become involved with the organisation. This may involve assessing detainees and ex-detainees in order to provide court reports on their situation. In some cases,

psychiatrists can also play a role in securing appropriate specialist care for detainees and other asylum seekers with severe mental health problems. If you are interested in becoming involved with the work of Medical Justice, please contact Cornelius Katona (email: c.katona@kent.ac.uk).

forthcoming events

The British Neuropsychiatry Association (BNPA) would like to announce the **2007 BNPA meeting entitled Neuro-psychiatry and neuroscience, epilepsy, parkinson's disease**. The meeting will be held on 22–23 February 2007 at the Institute of Child Health in London. For further information please contact BNPA (tel/fax: 01621 84 3334; email: gwen.cutmore@lineone.net) or visit the website at <http://www.bnpa.org.uk>

The International Society for the Psychological Treatments of the Schizophrenias and other Psychoses (ISPS UK Network) would like to announce the **2007 ISPS UK residential conference entitled Psychosis: experiencing understanding recovering**. The conference will take place on 26–27 March 2007 at the University of Bath. Keynote speakers are Peter Chadwick (UK), Johan

Cullberg (Sweden), Douglas Gill (UK), Courtenay Harding (USA), Glynn Harrison (UK) and Douglas Turkington (UK). For further details please contact Annabel Thomas, ISPS UK Administrator, PO Box 707, Gerrards Cross, Bucks SL9 0XS (tel: 01494 580 101; email: isps@athomas99.freepress.co.uk) or visit the website at <http://www.isps.org/uk>

Developmental traumatology – the hidden crisis in secure settings is the title of a national conference being held on Saturday 16 June 2007 at St Andrew's Hospital, Northampton. The conference will highlight young people who are victims of physical and sexual violence in childhood who end up in prison and a variety of secure settings, and explore the emerging treatment options. Speakers include Professor Michael DeBellis, Director of the Healthy Childhood Brain

Development and Developmental Traumatology Research Program at Duke University, North Carolina. For further details, please contact Jo Nairn (tel: 01604 616537; email: jnairn@standrew.co.uk).

The **2007 World Mental Health Congress of the World Federation for Mental Health** will be held in Hong Kong, China on 19–23 August 2007. The congress theme is 'Impact of culture on mental health: east meets west' and keynote speakers are Professor Anthony Bateman, University College London (UK) and Professor Wen-Shing Tseng, University of Hawaii (USA). For further details please contact Congress Secretariat, The Hong Kong Mental Health Conference Limited, 332 Nam Cheong Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, China (email: info@wmhc2007.com) or visit the website at <http://www.wmhc2007.com>