BOOK REVIEWS

E. FULLER TORREY: *Out of the Shadows: Confronting America's Mental Health Crisis.* John Wiley, New York, 1997, 244 pp, $16.95, ISBN 0-471-24532-1.

Deinstitutionalization of the "mentally ill" in the United States began in earnest a couple of decades ago. The force that compelled this movement came from unlikely "allies": one, a humanitarian concern that the severely "mentally ill" were neglected and abused in state hospital systems; the other, public sentiment that large hospitals that warehoused psychiatric patients was extremely costly to the tax payer. A profusion of briefs brought to the courts by some of the best legal minds in the nation resulted in the closing or the drastic down-sizing of state hospitals throughout the country.

According to Torrey, little or no concern was given to the effect that deinstitutionalization would have on the lives of the patients discharged or of those of their families and that of the community. For example, no research was conducted prior to deinstitutionalization. This state of affairs "helped create the mental illness crisis by discharging people from public psychiatric hospitals without ensuring that they received the medication and rehabilitation services necessary for them to live successfully in the community" (p. 10). As a result, Torrey indicates, there are an "estimated 2.2 million Americans with untreated severe mental illness. On any given day, approximately 150,000 of them are homeless, living on the streets or in public shelters. Another 159,000 are incarcerated in jails and prisons, mostly for crimes committed because they were not being treated. Some of them become violent and may terrorize their families, towns or urban neighborhoods. A very large number have died prematurely as a result of accidents and suicides" (p. 3).

Out of the Shadows is an excellent critique of the reasons for our present "mental illness" crisis. Torrey offers a plethora of insightful recommendations for dealing with this complex problem. I was disappointed, however, that he did not discuss what I regard as the core issue concerning the "mentally ill": the problem is really about what we value in American society. Our society readily shuns those who are unable to get on with their lives without assistance—and bridles at the idea that we must pay for their care for the rest of their lives. Proper and appropriate care for the "mentally ill" will not come about until a consensus of citizens accepts the notion that these people are as deserving of our humanity as anyone else.

For me the most difficult-to-accept aspect of *Out of the Shadows* is Torrey's questionable notion that severe "mental illness" is essentially a neurological disorder, best treated by physicians and medication. Those of us who have spent many years providing long-term psychodynamic treatment of these patients, know that deep commitment to these patients, supported by compassion, creativity, and persistence, has enabled many of these difficult patients to get on with their lives.

Some of my experience with these patients came from a common setting with Torrey—Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, DC.—where I served first on staff, later as a teaching consultant. In fact, for awhile there I was a consultant to a psychiatric division of which Torrey was the administrative psychiatrist.

Torrey also makes some dubious logical and psychological assumptions about the etiology of severe "mental illness." For example, he points out that there are observable organic differences in the brains of some (why not all?) patients diagnosed as "schizophrenic" from that of nonschizophrenics. In concluding that these data indicate that schizophrenia has an organic rather than psychosocial etiology, Torrey ignores a basic psychological principle in explaining behavior: structure equals function; function equals structure. In other words, just as disturbed body chemistry and abnormal physiology can result in disordered behavior, so can disordered behavior change body chemistry and physiology. Consequently, since there is no convincing evidence that familial and other social and psychological conditions contribute little to severe "mental illness," psychodynamic psychotherapy in skilled hands may still be properly regarded as an important treatment for severely disturbed patients.

As a guide to the practical and necessary steps required to come to terms with the "mental illness" crisis, *Out of the Shadows* is highly recommended.

New York, NY   CARL GOLDBERG, PH.D.

CHRISTOPHER D. WEBSTER AND MARGARET D. JACKSON, EDS.: *Impulsivity: Theory, Assessment and Treatment.* New York: The Guilford Press, 1997, 462 pp., $46.95, ISBN 1-57230-225-9.

Impulsivity is a topic that often crosses the lips of mental health practitioners, and yet a close look at the term leads to some questions. Do we mean only those acts without second thoughts, or do we include those that are well-planned but seemingly driven by a force that exceeds usual controls? And what of the adaptively rapid responses of sports figures and heroes?

This volume, based in part on two conferences held on the subject, offers a close look at this topic, with special emphasis on the related topic of dangerousness. Chapters are by various authors, although many are from the same or related institutions. The book covers the conceptual issues related to impulsivity, as well as assessment and treatment. Although the chapter names give the appearance of a comprehensive, textbook-style of coverage, the chapters tend to be more idiosyncratic than encyclopedic. This feature is a bit confusing, but makes for more interesting reading. The book tends to value structured assessment instruments, and it contains a number of chapters on that subject. While the chapters try to explain the terms used to assess the qualities of such tools, the discussion rapidly gets fairly thick for those less interested in structured assessment; such persons may wish to skip parts of some of those chapters.

While there are chapters that take a more practical, clinical view, and some that argue with the main thrust of the book from a sociological or social psychology