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## **BOOKS AND JOURNALS REVIEWS**

**Bartosz Grabski**

### **INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHIATRIC ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS, PHYSICIANS, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS**

Jagiellonian University Press, Krakow 2015, 159 pages

*Introduction to psychiatric assessment for students, physicians, psychologists and psychotherapists* by Dr Bartosz Grabski brings a breath of fresh air to the Polish market of specialist publications. Leonardo da Vinci used to say that “simplicity is the ultimate sophistication”. Therefore, when someone undertakes the ambitious task to describe the core or basics of a phenomenon, it evokes reasonable anxiety whether the description is not excessively simplified and hence the subject matter is lost. The author handles the task skillfully and his book indeed is what the title and Einstein’s motto from one of the first pages promise: “everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler”. Grabski focuses with great insight on the practical aspects of psychiatric assessment. While using real-life or even colloquial language, he sets the main focus on ‘how to assess exactly, what to tell the Patient, what to do and what not to do during the assessment’. Thanks to such solution, the book may really, in line with the author’s intention, aspire to become a “pocket assistant” for students, physicians, psychologists and psychotherapists. Dr Grabski purposefully leaves out the detailed description of psychopathology and underlines that this task has been successfully covered by textbooks that are available on the market.

The book begins with an enthusiastic foreword by Professor Józef Krzysztof Gierowski and a personal preface from the author. The substantive part begins with chapters on building the doctor-patient relationship, and phenomena occurring in this relationship. These chapters are probably the greatest asset of the publication. The author raises there the crucial topic for psychiatric assessment – the meeting of two people. He also refers to the tradition of humanist thought. It is assumed that the success of the said meeting is based on the fundamental importance of authenticity, respect, kindness and partnership. Dr Grabski draws from the best, rich traditions of the Krakow centre and its extraordinary figures, such as Prof. Antoni Kępiński. Moreover, he refers to his own long-time experience in working with patients. According to the main idea of the textbook, the thoughts are ordered in the form of practical tips

concerning an advisable attitude towards the Patient (Be), required behaviors (Do), and warnings (Avoid).

Another and at the same time the largest part of the publication consists of a simplified classification of symptoms of psychiatric disorders for practical purposes. The author systematically presents disorders of emotions and their expression, psychomotor drive disorders, thought disorders, disorders of perception and cognitive functions, as well as suicidal thoughts and suicidal tendencies. When discussing every symptom, he follows a clear pattern: description, example, manner of assessment (with precious practical tips), interpretation, clinical meaning, and additional remarks. Elegant and legible tables that illustrate the descriptions of delusions are particularly eye-catching. This part is further supplemented with a valuable chapter on basic questions concerning sexuality in psychiatric assessment. The author is right to emphasize how important it is that the clinicians who deal with psychic health do not omit this immensely significant sphere of human life.

The substantive part ends with an annex containing practical appendices – without them a practitioner’s textbook would not be complete: a simplified outline of psychological assessment, templates for psychological assessment, template for interview, and an objective interview. At the end of the book you will find references, an index of symptoms, a list of tables and a note about the author.

To sum up, readers are offered a precious, innovative and, first and foremost, a very practical book – a textbook created by a practitioner for practitioners. What particularly attracts one’s attention is the compact, legible and user-friendly form that pursues the idea of a “pocket assistant”. I fully agree with Prof. Gierowski’s remark included in the foreword: one can hope and expect that the publication will be an important and useful, maybe even obligatory, reading for medicine students who pursue clinical instruction in psychiatry. I strongly recommend this position also to all those who learn how to build meaningful, professional, and healing relationships with people struggling with psychiatric health issues.

**Grzegorz Mączka**