

Personality Disorders Over Time. Precursors, Course and Outcome.

Joel Paris. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing (www.appi.org). 2003, 224 pp, \$33.00, (paperback).

Professor Paris has crammed his life's work into this book. He writes cogently about how, over many years he has developed both a theoretical position and a treatment method for personality disorders (PD). Written in the first person, initially I found this densely packed prose difficult to digest. However as I became more accustomed to the author's style, I found the scope of the book admirable in its attempt to make PD work more manageable.

For the clinician new to the area, there is a wealth of information on precursors, course and outcome and an attempt to provide treatment advice. Paris also spends considerable time detailing his major research interest which is to follow up borderline PD patients longitudinally as single case studies.

Paris believes in the modification of personality traits and holds 3 basic tenets: be practical not radical ; set realistic goals ; focus on the present and use individual Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. The traits he focuses on are *cognitive* (Cluster A – odd), *externalising* (Cluster B – impulsive) and *internalising* (Cluster C – anxious). Paris includes comments on modern literature and treatment approaches and holds firm that therapy is more helpful than medication. Dialectical Behaviour Treatment is mentioned briefly but Mentalisation Based Treatment and therapeutic community treatment are not.

Paris is very clear in his view that PD is a chronic condition that requires management and intermittent treatment over time. He does not subscribe to a recovery model and uses clinical anecdotes to illustrate his position. In particular Paris sees chronic suicidality as a condition which needs to be discussed within the patient's family/ social network so suicide plans can be shared. Paris likens this chronic suicidality to severe mental illness.

As a passionate researcher, Paris communicates his ideas from the heart. He leaves his early acquaintance with psychodynamic theory far behind him. Paris prefers to keep things simple and must be applauded for that.

Denise Barulis
Warneford Hospital
Oxford, United Kingdom