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With growing recognition of the importance of evidence-based practice, in recent years there has been a steady stream of publications which aim to summarise the implications of treatment outcome research for routine clinical practice (1-7). These have come to be known among busy clinicians as “What Works?” books. Barrett and Ollendick’s volume on interventions that work with children and adolescents is a welcome addition to this emerging tradition.

This book offers a truly international perspective on empirically-based approaches to clinical intervention. The editors of this volume are from different hemispheres. Paula Barrett is from Griffith University in Australia. Thomas Ollendick is at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the USA. The 44 contributors of the 21 chapters that comprise this volume come from the USA, Australia, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands.

The book is well structured. It is divided into three sections. The first part contains five chapters. These deal with a number of general issues in the area of evidence-based practice including assessment, treatment evaluation, developmental issues, issues concerning cultural diversity and recent major advances in the application of scientific knowledge to clinical practice. The third part of the book which contains four chapters is concerned with prevention. Topics covered in this section include the prevention of
emotional problems, specifically, anxiety and depression; and the prevention of
behavioural problems, specifically oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and
substance abuse.

Part two, the heart of the book, contains a dozen chapters each of which summarises
research on the effectiveness of particular interventions for specific psychological
difficulties and then outlines the implications of these findings for clinical practice. Topics
covered in part two include generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social phobia,
obsessive compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, school refusal, specific
phobias, depression, substance abuse, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional
defiant disorder and conduct disorder.

Overall, the chapters in part two are well-written, up-to-date review papers by international
experts. Most chapters in part two offer thorough reviews of available research on specific
interventions for specific disorders, followed by brief outlines of how the research findings
might be applied in clinical settings. Because this approach has been taken, Barrett and
Ollendick’s volume is not a clinical practice manual. Insufficient detail is given to allow
clinicians to use this volume as a basis for practice. Rather, it is an overall guide which
offers advice on treatment manuals and other resources clinicians might find useful to
consult in planning treatment programmes.

The main shortcoming of this volume is that it leaves many important areas uncovered. In
the section on prevention, notable omissions are the prevention of developmental delay in
low birth weight or socially disadvantaged children, prevention of adjustment difficulties in
children with sensory impairments, prevention of child abuse, prevention of bullying,
prevention of adjustment problems in children with chronic physical illnesses such as asthma or diabetes, prevention of teenage pregnancy, STD’s and HIV infection, and suicide prevention. For these topics, which have been addressed in other “what works?” books on prevention (5-7), there is considerable evidence for the effectiveness of psychological prevention programmes. With respect to coverage of topics on evidence-based treatments for specific disorders, notable omissions include pervasive developmental disorders such as autism, eating disorders, psychogenic pain, and encopresis. There is good evidence for empirically supported psychological intervention for these clinical problems, which have been covered in other “What Works?” books (1-4). The inclusion of chapters on all of the prevention and treatment topics not covered in Barrett and Ollendick’s volume, would have enhanced the book’s comprehensiveness, but probably doubled its size.

The Handbook of Interventions that Work with Children and Adolescents is recommended as an essential purchase for all clinical psychology libraries. Postgraduates and academics involved in research and evaluation in the field of child and adolescent mental health should also seriously consider purchasing this book. Clinicians involved in the delivery of prevention and treatment programmes would do well to follow the practice guidelines arising from the large body of research reviewed in this volume.

REFERENCES


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