

Integrative Therapies For Depression: Refining Models for Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention

Edited by James Greenblatt, MD
and Kelly Brogan, MD 2016.
CRC Press 531 pages. Hardcover

Depression is one of most prevalent of the psychiatric disorders and an astounding 15% of the population experiences a mood disorder at some point in their lives. Moreover, as a highly recurrent disorder, about 75% of sufferers will experience one or more relapses at some point in their lives. As the second most costly medical disorder in America, it's not surprising that antidepressant drugs are the number one prescribed medication in Americans between ages 18-44. Such debilitation in the most productive population cohort translates to an economic drain of over 100 billion dollars. We face incredible challenges to our healthcare system and our nation's economic health.

These facts are not revelations but the grim lay of the land in modern psychiatry. Why is it that this single disease is responsible for so much personal misery and societal paralysis? Perhaps the question should really be why did such a common disease end up with so few treatment tools, namely, the DSM-V, a lot of drugs, with a few token therapies tossed on the periphery?

For all the billion dollar efforts to treat depression, here's what we get. Between 40-70% of patients *do not* respond or respond only partially to antidepressants. The profession unhelpfully deems the patients as "treatment refractory" instead of the more reasonable supposition that the treatment strategies themselves are on the wrong track.

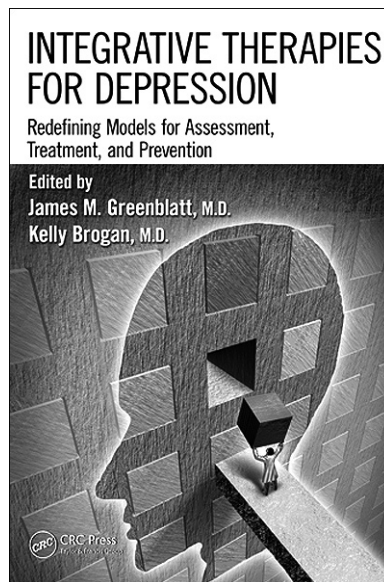
That's where James Greenblatt and Kelly Brogan position their unique textbook. *Integrative Therapies* aims to put into the hands of practitioners an all-in-one reference guide containing so much of what the mainstream profession has overlooked or sidelined. The book is an eclectic collection of 31 "chapters," each, in fact, a paper in itself. Authored by the best practitioners and researchers in the field, they describe a fresh spectrum of assessment and treatment options beyond the DSM/drug model.

As diverse as the subject matter is, this book is focused on a simple premise: getting patients well without drugs or using minimum effective doses.

The paper's authors describe how inflammation, genetics and hormonal imbalances, gastrointestinal health, environmental stress, and nutritional deficiencies directly and peripherally affect depression. The authors weave these seemingly diverse sources into a big picture linking the body and mind to the pathogenesis of mood disorders. The many papers are clustered in somewhat broad classifications.

Chapters two through five, for example, deal with the body and encompass immunity, inflammation; the gut-brain axis, GI tract infections, stress, trauma and mitochondrial dysfunction. Chapters 7, through 10 are the orthomolecular sections which explore how nutritional deficiencies in trace elements, vitamins, minerals, essential fats and hormones affect depression and the clinical response to therapies.

The next few chapter broadly discuss hormonal environment through the hypothalamic pituitary axis, adrenal, reproductive and thyroid hormones. The influence of xenobiotics are covered in chapters 14 and 15 and 17. Depression can hit us from external molecular factors such as certain dietary



peptides, toxic chemical, as well as through the effects of non-psychiatric drugs which a depressed patient may be taking.

Integrative Therapies addresses the five main flaws in our current approach: diagnostic labelling, efficacy, safety, tolerability and affordability. Despite this indictment, all hope is not lost as we see out how the model may be fixed simply and at minimal cost if we just open our minds a little. Herbs such as St. John's Wort, Saffron, Golden Root, the methyl donor Folic Acid and SAME, and serotonin precursors such as 5-HTP are simple and effective adjuncts and alternatives. Non-vitamin, non-drug therapies include such strategies as exercise, stress reduction, bright light and mind-body practices. Something increasingly rare in depression textbooks are discussions on cognitive and talk therapy and *Integrative Therapies* brings forth a wealth of ideas. Existential approaches through spirituality,

religion, meditation, mindfulness and narrative therapy are discussed in detail. These are summarized as an integrative management of mood disorders across the spectrum of life—*in utero*, in adolescence, and in the elderly. The final chapter, "Clinical Case Studies, Putting it All Together," is a key summary of how practitioners apply the preceding therapeutic ideas in the real world with real patients. Patient examples are given and reading this, one can see how the integrative practitioner's clinical detective work can unlock the grip of depression in patient's lives.

Integrative Therapies provides the practical information vital to breaking out of the DSM/drug model. It is aimed at psychiatrists, psychologists, family therapists, and all other clinicians who care for those afflicted with depression. This book is a unique compilation of alternatives and is highly recommended to the practitioner.

—Review by Greg Schilhab