



## RECOMMENDED ACADEMIC READING

For this issue of Recommended Academic Reading, we have solicited reviews of the *Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (1). Thank you to our expert reviewers for providing their perspectives on this resource, a book which may be of particular interest to our readers.

<sup>1</sup>Elbe D, Black TR, McGrane IR, Choi S (Editors). *Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents*. Hogrefe Publishing; 2023.

### Review #1 of “*Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*”

**Paul Slodovnick MD<sup>1</sup>, Latifa Jaafar MD FRCPC<sup>1</sup>, Daniel A. Gorman MD FRCPC<sup>2</sup>**

As a point-of-care resource to assist clinicians working in pediatric mental health, *Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* delivers successfully. Elbe and his colleagues have presented an impressive work that is informative, thorough, and organized as a practical reference for prescribers. Moreover, it not only provides detailed information on psychotropic agents, but also contextualizes pharmacotherapy as part of a multimodal treatment approach. As such, the handbook serves as a clinical guide that extends beyond the confines of psychopharmacology. In the Introduction, the editors express their intention that this work will serve as “a resource to both those in training and experienced clinicians.” As reviewers representing both target audiences, we believe this edition positively achieves its stated goal.

The initial chapter lays the groundwork for the rest of the handbook by providing a review of conditions commonly encountered in child and adolescent psychiatric practice. The middle chapters, representing the largest portion of the handbook, are organized by drug class (e.g., antidepressants, antipsychotics, ADHD medications), with subheadings

based on mechanism of action. Each of these chapters provides a wealth of clinically relevant information such as indications, mechanisms of action, adverse effects, precautions, use in pregnancy and lactation, drug interactions, dosing recommendations, and monitoring strategies. While all this information could be overwhelming, the clean and colour-coded layout ensures ease of reference and an enjoyable reading experience. More detailed information is also provided in numerous charts, including elimination half-life, metabolizing enzymes, rates of adverse events, etc.

To support clinicians with respect to questions outside of standard psychopharmacology, the later chapters include information on natural health products, emerging medications with pending approval, pharmacogenetics, and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). The handbook’s broad perspective is also underscored by brief discussions of psychotherapy in the early chapters, as well as an exploration of ethical considerations in prescribing. Finally, this edition comes with supplementary materials available for download online, including useful handouts for patients and caregivers about specific medications.

While the handbook’s comprehensiveness is one of its main strengths, this also leads to some shortcomings. Because of the sheer volume of material, it can sometimes be difficult to find specific information that is clinically salient, such as the fact that fluoxetine is the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) with the most evidence for efficacy in the treatment of adolescent depression (this fact appears in the middle of a section on p. 52 and might be missed). However, this concern is mitigated by access to an online version of the handbook that has a search feature (included with purchase). Another issue is that in the understandable effort to make the handbook useful for an international audience, the editors have included many medications – especially psychostimulant formulations – that are not available in Canada and may be distracting for a Canadian reader. There is also the challenge of adequately updating and referencing such an ambitious work in its 5<sup>th</sup> edition. While many statements are referenced, many are not and may be questionable or outdated (e.g., Tourette syndrome is described as having an autosomal dominant pattern of inheritance [p. 7], which is no longer thought to be the case).

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These shortcomings are relatively minor, however, and far outweighed by the handbook's considerable strengths. With its well-organized structure and layout, comprehensive content, and practical insights, it serves as a valuable tool for clinicians dedicated to providing quality care to children and adolescents with psychiatric disorders.

## Review #2 of “*Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*”

**Sabina Abidi MD FRCPC<sup>1</sup>, Laura Miller BSc Pharm, PharmD<sup>2</sup>**

Among the most well attended sessions at the annual Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Conference (CACAP) are the psychopharmacology institutes, with attendance often selling out months in advance. Working in a field at times fraught with a dearth of evidence regarding recommendations for pharmacological intervention for psychiatric illness in children and youth can lead to uncertainty and anxiety when treating those whose brains are most vulnerable. Furthermore, following recommendations proven to be effective in the adult spheres seems suboptimal. Child & adolescent psychiatrists crave up to date, evidence-based education accessible at their fingertips to ensure they are making the best treatment decisions for their patients. To this end, the fifth and most recent edition of the *Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents* meets this need thoroughly, and with elegance.

Readers will be familiar with the previous editions of the Handbook, acclaimed for its user-friendly interface, and recognizable colour and icon schemes, allowing for flip-through access to desired information. The consistent layout arranged by illness and medicine class allows for easy navigation and the detailed references root the recommendations in evidence fostering trust in the content. These features are consistent and can be expected in this new edition with valuable updates and additions that further enhance the user experience.

At the outset the chapter focused on safe and ethical prescribing for children and adolescents is a thoughtful and responsible addition. The expansion of the chapter on use

of alternative or natural health products such as omega-3 fatty acids for use in specific illness populations is relevant. The inclusion of what the authors term “unapproved treatments” to ameliorate symptoms of certain illnesses including consideration of cannabidiol, ketamine and folinic acid in this edition is pertinent and well-targeted to current presentations. There is a noted update of agents included in the head-to-head comparisons of antipsychotics, medicines used for ADHD, and antidepressants. Comparison parameters include pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, adverse effects, signs of toxicity, use in pregnancy and others. One need only browse to ensure treatment considerations are up to date, reasonable and grounded in evidence. Newer sections such as the chapter on catatonia, extrapyramidal side effects associated with antipsychotic medicines and interventions for aggression management speak to the noted increased prevalence of specific cases since the last edition, filling a knowledge gap for providers and indirectly meeting treatment needs for our patients and families.

An additional benefit of the handbook is the inclusion of information on discontinuation syndromes in the chapter on substances of abuse which are difficult to find easily elsewhere. Furthermore, the provision of not only research-based evidence but also inclusion of clinical experience reminds providers that there are always options to consider in the younger population even in the face of lack of evidence. The online version of the text is easy to navigate allowing for “at the elbow” advice when in need of a quick reference to assist in making treatment decisions. Moreover, the inclusion of a link to access pdf files for parent and caregiver information sheets to facilitate informed discussions and shared decision making with patients and families is very welcome.

Child & adolescent psychiatrists, pharmacists, nursing, learners and providers will undoubtedly enjoy the updated version of the *Clinical Handbook of Psychotropic Drugs for Children and Adolescents*. The authors have been thoughtful in their revisions, expansions, and updates fostering improved certainty and confidence for providers and in turn patients and caregivers alike.

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