

# Psychiatric and Behavioral Disorders in Israel

By Itzhak Levav MD. Geffen Publishing House, Jerusalem, 2009, 342 pages

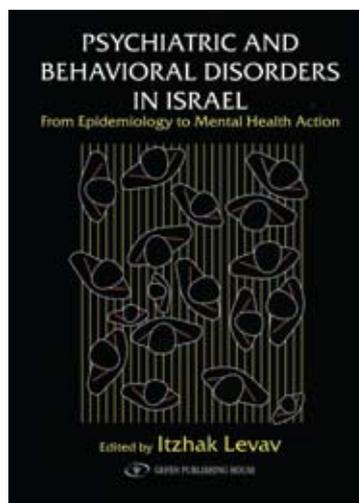
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This is a fascinating book that provides considerable information on the epidemiology of mental disturbances in Israel. The comprehensive Psychiatric Case Register database of the Ministry of Health enables various analyses and surveillances. The State of Israel, although a small country, has absorbed massive waves of immigrations from a multitude of countries. The fields of medicine and legislation are highly developed, thus the above characteristics create an interesting human laboratory that can be analyzed and from which much can be learned.

Edited by Prof. Itzhak Levav, this captivating book includes chapters by many renowned authors in various fields who present original views on different subjects. The book presents a social picture of mental health issues involving women, children the elderly, Arabs, new immigrants, Holocaust survivors, and more. The book also provides information on more familiar subjects such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Israel, addiction, affective disorders, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), schizophrenia, and issues that often prompt public interest, such as suicide.

The book is a must for the clinician, the researcher and the lecturer. Each chapter develops in an interesting manner from a general introduction, to a review of the relevant research and epidemiology, and is summarized in the chapter "From epidemiology to mental health action."

Every chapter contributes new and insightful knowledge from an original viewpoint, even when dealing with familiar topics. For example, the chapter on women's mental health raises the issue of military service ("The trauma of



women facing army-related stressors"). In the thorough chapter on "Mental health problems in Israeli youth," we learn that pervasive development disorder (PDD) has become more common today that in past decades, a phenomenon also observed in many western countries. Another unique chapter discusses the epidemiology of "Mental health disorders and Arabs in Israel," including PTSD, addictions, and disorders associated specifically with the Arab sector such as "Blood vengeance and polygamy."

In a detailed chapter on Holocaust survivors, the research background is described. Also discussed is the origin of the concept of Holocaust survivors and the understanding that became evident over time of damage beyond the physical harm as well as extended periods of hunger. The unique situation of the aging population, which copes with additional illnesses and bereavement, is also discussed.

The interesting chapter on smoking reports on the decline in the rate of smokers in recent years. Have we

reached the lowest possible number of smokers and what is the meaning of the differences in smoking habits between Arabs and Jews, and between academicians and those without higher education?

The chapter on affective disorders emphasizes the effects of depression. For example: "in the coming years, MDD [major depressive disorder] will rank first among the leading causes with years lived with disability in high-income countries, such as Israel."

Another important database is the cancer database, which enables additional cross-checking and research on the relationship between mental health and cancer ("Bipolar disorder and cancer").

The chapter on PTSD discusses relevant issues such as "The aftermath of the first Lebanon War," and deals with concepts that have already entered the lexicon of mental disorders, such as delayed-onset reactivation of PTSD, and secondary traumatization.

A number of interesting studies are reported on schizophrenia in Israel, lifestyles unique to Israel such as the kibbutz, and risk factors for schizophrenia, schizophrenia and the risk for cancer (lower among schizophrenia patients), and more.

I briefly mentioned only a few of the interesting subjects from various perspectives in the book. Reading the book in its entirety will complete the picture. It is interesting and worthwhile.

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