

BOOK REVIEW

Addiction Essentials: Go-To Guide for Clinicians and Patients

By Carlton K. Erickson

W. W. Norton & Co.
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Reviewed by
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Addiction Essentials is a 188-page paperback aptly subtitled the *Go-To Guide for Clinicians and Patients*. Presented in user-friendly language, the text is logically organized and includes a convenient index and guide to resources. The stated purpose of the book is to enhance understanding of students, clinicians, and the public concerning the nature of addiction. Each chapter begins with an overview in which key concepts are summarized. The reader is then led through discussions of cause, diagnosis, physical responses, co-occurring disorders, therapeutic approaches, relapse prevention, and resources. Written in uncomplicated language, the topical discussions address definitions, professional concerns, controversies, and directions for management.

Carlton Erickson, Ph.D. is a Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Texas in Austin. Widely published, he has won numerous recognitions and awards for his work, a focus of which is the education of both professionals and the public on the important topics discussed in *Addiction Essentials*. Though he shares the same surname, the author is not related to Milton Erickson, M.D., or to the reviewer.

The author's own admission that there are areas in which he considers his own knowledge limited, sets the tone that realistic treatment of addiction requires a community of resources, a theme that echoes throughout the work. Ten of the 18 chapters are co-authored with other professionals, including, Peter Pociluyko MA, a clinician and educator, and Mark Evan Goldman Ph.D., a pharmacologist with an extensive

background in research.

Erickson has designed a resource that is both easy to use and offers direction to readers from varying disciplines. Early sections of *Addiction Essentials* explain stages of addiction in a systematic manner that offers tools for self-assessment. A three-stage iterative cycle of use, withdrawal, and pre-occupation is described in a global manner that facilitates recognition of symptoms and patterns. These descriptions, which address both use and abuse, offer both professionals and the public, a context for evaluation and direction.

I particularly enjoyed Erickson's discussion of the complexities of categorizing addictions within the current DSM IV TR and his viewpoints about anticipated changes for the upcoming DSM V. By relating symptoms and behaviors to the physiological processes, as well as to diagnostic criteria, the clinician can better evaluate the client's status and risk factors. Erickson's commentary brought home the concept that nothing is ever as clear as it seems.

Erickson uses a psychopharmacological model with drugs grouped into four categories: alcohol, CNS stimulants, CNS depressants, and drugs that have CNS effects and are commonly associated with use disorders among adolescents. While addiction professionals may find much of the material within this book similar to other resources, concepts such as the reward pathway, receptor sites, and the roles of agonists remain elusive to the average clinician. Using straightforward language to address these topics, *Addiction Essentials* explains the physiological interface of neuro-adaptation and dysregulation in a style that helps to make those concepts understandable.

The explicit way with which neuropharmacology of substance use and abuse is approached is helpful even for a seasoned professional. The succinct organization of this guide makes it particularly useful in the clinical context. Overall, I found *Addiction Essentials* to be interesting in content, refreshing in its clarity, and useful for a first resource, a review, or a reflection of professional work.

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