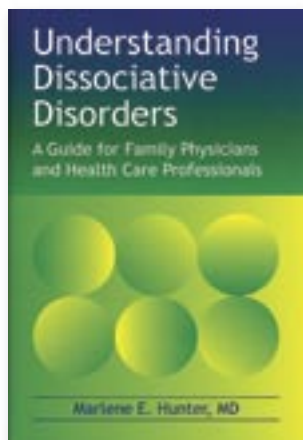




Book Reviews

Understanding dissociative disorders. A guide for family physicians and health care professionals

author Marlene E. Hunter
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confusing laboratory results, and those with chronic pain syndromes, are identified. Dr Hunter's book is rich with case examples, rules of thumb, and strategies for addressing the problems these patients have. Every family physician will recognize the patients described in the book and will learn simple ways of dealing with their complaints and avoiding the common pitfalls of overreferral and overinvestigation.

Despite its strengths, this book is probably not for the hard-core, evidence-based psychiatry crowd. Evidence, although presented in some detail in the section on medication, is mostly anecdotal. At times the author uses terminology (eg, "ego states," "switching") and offers therapeutic strategies without adequate definition or background information. For inadequately trained physicians, applying some of the simple maneuvers suggested could be detrimental. At times the book lacks focus, with long stories about patients that sometimes lead readers to lose focus as well.

The first four chapters of the book set the framework for identifying these patients, and the rest the book includes chapters on medication, pain, the emergency department, and posttraumatic stress disorder. We recommend this book to physicians who want to better understand their patients with dissociative disorders.

—Marjolaine Limbos, MSW, MA

—David Joyce, MD, CCFP

OVERALL RATING Good

STRENGTHS Demystifies a complicated area of family medicine

WEAKNESSES Lacks focus at times; not always evidence-based

AUDIENCE Family physicians, particularly those with an interest in psychotherapy
In *Understanding Dissociative Disorders*, Dr Hunter bravely takes on the task of helping family physicians understand these complicated patients and of developing a framework for identifying and treating them. She is to be commended for tackling a topic that many struggle to understand and for sharing her experience with us.

Dr Hunter succeeds—as the title suggests—in creating a guide for family physicians. She correctly identifies common misconceptions that physicians have about patients with dissociative symptoms. Key indicators of potential patients, including “thick chart patients,” patients with contradictory or

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