Practical child and adolescent psychopharmacology

The field of child and adolescent psychopharmacology is rapidly growing, but psychopharmacologic treatments for children cannot be straightforwardly extrapolated from adult studies, which presents clinicians with assessment and prescribing challenges. In this important book, a team of expert clinicians synthesizes the most recent research findings about drug treatment of a broad range of psychiatric disorders in children, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive–compulsive disorder, major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar mania, aggression in pervasive developmental disorder, Tourette’s syndrome, and substance abuse. They examine the issues of tolerability and efficacy, and inappropriate over-use, within a social and developmental context. For each disorder, pharmacotherapy is discussed in the wider context of neurobiology, etiology, diagnosis, and treatment. This will be essential reading for all mental health professionals to inform practice and improve patient outcomes.

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Child and adolescent psychiatry is an important and growing area of clinical psychiatry. The last decade has seen a rapid expansion of scientific knowledge in this field and has provided a new understanding of the underlying pathology of mental disorders in these age groups. This series is aimed at practitioners and researchers both in child and adolescent mental health services and developmental and clinical neuroscience. Focusing on psychopathology, it highlights those topics where the growth of knowledge has had the greatest impact on clinical practice and on the treatment and understanding of mental illness. Individual volumes benefit both from the international expertise of their contributors and a coherence generated through a uniform style and structure for the series. Each volume provides firstly an historical overview and a clear descriptive account of the psychopathology of a specific disorder or group of related disorders. These features then form the basis for a thorough critical review of the etiology, natural history, management, prevention and impact on later adult adjustment. Whilst each volume is therefore complete in its own right, volumes also relate to each other to create a flexible and collectable series that should appeal to students as well as experienced scientists and practitioners.

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Practical child and adolescent psychopharmacology

Edited by
Stan Kutcher
Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Dedicated to my wife and to my mother

– both of whom have put up with me for many years
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Preface

The field of child and adolescent psychopharmacology is rapidly growing and every clinician, physician, and other health provider alike must be informed of new directions and applications in the use of medications as they pertain to the treatment of psychiatric disorders in children and adolescents. To date, considerable research has been conducted which can properly direct the use of a variety of psychotropic compounds in a number of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders. In particular, well-established and effective pharmacologic treatments are available for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Tourette’s syndrome. Less well-established but nonetheless frequently applied pharmacotherapies are used to treat a variety of psychiatric illness (such as major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar mania) or specific symptoms which may occur independently or as a component of a particular psychiatric diagnosis – such as aggression in pervasive developmental disorder.

Evidence and experience to date clearly indicates that psychopharmacologic treatments for children and teenagers cannot be extrapolated from studies conducted in adult patients. Young people have a different central nervous system development, exhibit different cognitive, behavioral, and affective “norms” and are exposed to different environmental influences. All of these factors can influence the response to pharmacologic treatments – efficacy as well as tolerability. Thus, the study and practice of pharmacologic treatments of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders must become a special and significant area in its own right.

These treatments, while demanding proper scientific evaluation, also do not occur within a social vacuum. In many cases, popular sentiments often guided by inadequate knowledge or misinformation about the risks and benefits of the use of psychotropic compounds in children and adolescents can affect the prescription and use of these medications in young people. In some cases, this may lead to inappropriate over-use. In other cases, this may lead to the withholding of potentially effective interventions. In order to avoid both of these unacceptable outcomes, the clinician must be well informed about both
the science and the pragmatics of the use of medications in the treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders.

This book provides the practicing clinician with important information about the use of medications in treating psychiatric conditions found in young people. It is set in a social and developmental context as the chapters by Popper and Carrey outline. The clinical pragmatics are well summarized by Carlson. The remaining chapters deal with specific psychiatric disorders of children and adolescents and include chapters dedicated to the use of psychotropics in substance abuse and in medical conditions – two areas not well understood by many clinicians. Overall, this volume attempts to provide practical evidence-based information within an understandable clinical context.

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Stan Kutcher