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Preface to the fourth edition

Essential Psychiatry is a premium international psychiatric text with contributions from leaders in their respective fields. Whilst written essentially for the clinician, it encompasses the very latest research findings and has extensive and up-to-date referencing. It is a completely revised and updated version of Essentials of Postgraduate Psychiatry, 3rd ed. (eds. R. Murray, P. Hill, P. McGuffin; Cambridge University Press, 1997). Although it maintains the overall structure of that volume, it expands and extends its scope and includes cutting-edge contributions from a wide range of authors (from Europe, the Americas, Australia, Asia and Africa).

Care has been taken to ensure that, whilst chapters present contemporary research and clinical practice, they also reflect the rich historical heritage of the field of psychiatry. Both the major classification systems – the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder and the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases – are referenced throughout, with pointers to overlaps and differences between these systems.

The book is organized into sections, beginning with The Tools of Psychiatry and followed by Psychiatric Disorders (including discrete chapters on child and adolescent and old age psychiatry), Special Topics (e.g. social and transcultural aspects of psychiatry), Psychiatry in Specific Settings (e.g. psychiatry in primary care; community psychiatry) and Treatments in Psychiatry (covering biological, psychological and family interventions). Each chapter has supportive material, including tables and clinically focused fact boxes. The result is a book which can be read through from beginning to end, particular chapters read separately or sections read together. Each chapter, whilst standing alone, is cross-referenced to other chapters where relevant. The use of headings and subheadings and a comprehensive index make quick reference to specific topics easy.

We believe this book will be a major reference work for psychiatrists and mental health professionals across the world, as well as providing a comprehensive resource for psychiatric trainees which will endure well beyond their trainee years, and continue to be a source of knowledge and wisdom for years to come.

Robin M. Murray, Kenneth S. Kendler, Peter McGuffin, Simon Wessely, David J. Castle
June 2008