

books

COMING OFF PSYCHIATRIC DRUGS

Peter Lehmann (ed)

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psychiatry
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The primary audience for a book with this title should be people currently on medication and planning their withdrawal. Despite our hopes and good will, as reviewers who have withdrawn, we feel this book fails that target readership.

People on medication, no matter what their reading ability beforehand, will inevitably find their capacity to read, concentrate, and decipher information diminished. The information in this book is obscured by bad structure and design, poor indexing, and stilted transliteration.

The book is also seven years out of date, and feels it. Most of the contributors lived under a different therapeutic regime and in a radically other culture. Any passing relevance is rendered more obscure by the impending changes in our mental health legislation, and by the slide in confidence in the safety of psychotropic medications.

We were frustrated by the absence of political analysis – the stated link between a person's withdrawal and the evolution of their relationship to psychiatry wasn't expanded or examined. Experiential evidence needs such an analysis to enhance its credibility and diminish its deniability.

We found the uncritical inclusion of alternative practitioners in this book jarring, and remain unpersuaded by the editor's rationale for this. Several contributors make the point that the culture of dependence isn't confined to psychiatry; that alternative therapies reinforce dependence too.

If pressed, we would recommend reading Judy Chamberlain's brief and insightful preface and Karl Bach Jensen's chapter on 'Detoxification'.

Eleanor Dace and Andy Smith