



Book Review

Chronic Fatigue and its Syndromes

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Fatigue, usually under the name of ME, is fast overtaking fashion as a subject for articles in the press. It has long since overtaken sex and gardening. Even our so-called serious newspapers regularly run pages of alternative medicine, mostly devoted to fatigue. One has the impression that the gullible public will swallow anything both literally and metaphorically.

The fatigue business started in 1869 with the description of neurasthenia and the title of this peculiar disorder changed fairly frequently. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis was first coined as a condition in 1956 and the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome arrived in the 1980's.

The three authors of the book have reviewed the evidence about Fatigue Syndromes from a variety of perspectives including medical, social and psychological aspects. Their thesis or conclusion is to locate chronic fatigue and its syndromes in the grey area between physical disturbance and psychiatric disturbance. Some people might think that this is a bit of a cop-out and the authors actually state that they have made every effort to draw wider conclusions wherever possible. However, there is no doubt that it is the most objective and comprehensive review of this problem available. The authors deal with the nature and extent of fatigue, the history of chronic fatigue (a fascinating subject in itself), the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in great detail, the assessment and management of Chronic Fatigue and end with an overview which is really quite outstanding.

The book is well written and easily accessible and I have no doubt that it will be of immense value to workers in all disciplines. The book is strongly recommended.

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