Some clinicians may wonder why a special issue devoted to psychiatry for the internist is needed, as so much of an internist’s daily practice involves psychiatric issues. However, familiarity with problems does not always equate with expertise or even comfort and/or competence. Therefore, this volume aims to review reasonable approaches to common psychiatric conditions and situations and to guide thoughtful strategies and informed interventions. The core jobs of an internist, to diagnose and to treat, are often complex and conducted under the pressure of time. This leads some practitioners to target the “low-hanging fruit” of patient problems and to prioritize concerns (so as not to get bogged down in a quagmire of dilemmas and complaints). Unfortunately, psychiatric conditions are among those most often linked with disability days and dysphoria; addressing psychiatric diagnoses and their manifestations will increase patient satisfaction and decrease dysfunction and overall health care costs.

This volume starts off with an informed discussion of an approach to collaborative care and cultural competence and then proceeds to the assessment of patients in crisis (providing pointers for the determination of the risks of suicide and/or violence). Then, approaches to patients with cognitive dysfunction (eg, with delirium or dementia), dysregulated mood (eg, major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder), and anxiety are offered. Treatment strategies, involving pharmacological (eg, use of antidepressants, antipsychotics, anxiolytics, mood stabilizers, natural remedies) and non-pharmacological approaches (eg, talking therapies), are reviewed. Chronic diseases (eg, substance use and abuse, somatoform disorders, cancer, diabetes, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal distress, premenstrual dysphoria) and their management are then discussed. Forensic issues (eg, approaches to informed consent, capacity decisions, civil commitment, malpractice, boundary crossings) are reviewed to inform clinicians about necessary knowledge and responsibilities. The volume ends with a discussion of end-of-life treatment decisions and organ failure/transplantation. For further information on these and other topics, relevant to your practice, useful references are available.
It is our sincere hope that the presentation of these common conditions and problematic issues is readable, informative, and helpful to you and to your patients.

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REFERENCES