

BOOK REVIEW

The End of My Addiction. How One Man Cured Himself of Alcoholism. By Dr Olivier Ameisen. Piatkus Press, London, 2009, £11.99. Paperback: 324 pp. ISBN-10: 0374140979

Dr Olivier Ameisen is a remarkable medical researcher who shares his journey from profound alcohol addiction to sobriety in this fascinating book. He writes in a well-educated informative style, describing his own personal experience whilst usefully incorporating relevant research and scientific papers.

The early chapters of the book describe Dr Ameisen's background and build a symphonic and textured composition of the destruction of increasing alcohol dependence. We are allowed privileged access to thoughts and emotions that convey Dr Ameisen's struggle with his addiction. He discusses alcoholism as an illness that requires treatment and his insights will provoke readers to reflect on their own conceptualization of alcohol dependence. Clinicians often deal with patients who repeatedly relapse; Dr Ameisen's description of himself and his search for a cure should provoke readers to think more about the biological nature of alcohol dependence and less about human failing.

Also valuable are the chapters that detail Dr Ameisen's experience of the clinicians who treated him and particularly when he describes compulsory hospitalization. It is noticeable that these approaches do not work for him and his residual negativity about them. There are descriptions of the work and principles

of Alcoholics Anonymous and also Residential Rehabilitation that will prove useful for those newer to this field.

Dr Ameisen writes this book to document his investigations into the use of baclofen, a muscle relaxant, and its novel use in the treatment of alcohol dependence and other addictive disorders. He notes initial case studies and animal work, before prescribing himself the drug, and working out his own dosage regime. He explores the available literature in this area, appending the key papers to his book. There are clear explanations of the rationale and possible mechanisms of the action of baclofen, and useful reappraisals of the other pharmacological treatments of alcoholism.

The strength of character and audacity that drove Dr Ameisen to his early life successes again show through in the latter chapters where he establishes contact with key researchers and starts to challenge the establishment to look at a potential new treatment for alcohol dependence. Alcohol and Alcoholism's foresight in publishing Dr Ameisen's original case report is favourably reported in this book, and should be celebrated.

This book is to be recommended. It provides ample literature to strongly consider baclofen for patients who fail to respond to treatments in our conventional current repertoire. It is also a useful educational resource for those who work in the addiction field and for people who seek to gain a greater understanding of alcohol dependence.

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