

Massachusetts General Hospital Archives and Special Collections
MC 33
Practical reviews in Psychiatry
1976-2005

Ca. 344 audiocassettes in 5 cartons and 1 box; plus Marantz cassette player
Accession number: 2016-9
Processed June 2016 by Jeffrey Mifflin

Acquisition: Donated in June 2016 by Robert S. Abernethy III, MD.

Access: There are no restrictions on the contents of the collection.

Copyright: Requests to copy or publish materials from the collection should be directed to the MGH Archivist. Oakstone Publications is the copyright holder.

Agency History:

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry” is a series of recordings issued once a month, aimed at professionals in the field of psychiatry. Prior to the official launch of “Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” Robert S. Abernethy III, MD, and Gerald Klerman, MD, had recorded (ca. 1974) a conversation regarding treatment of depression. This tape was distributed by Lilly as a promotion for its pharmaceutical sales. The series itself was started in 1976 by MGH –trained psychiatrists Abernethy (coordinator); Fred Guggenheim, MD; and Alan J. Gelenberg, MD. The publisher and distributor in the early years was Bernard Schencker, MD, of Educational Reviews, Inc. The series was acquired in the 1990s by Oakstone Publications, which retains the copyrights.

Abernethy was Chief of the Freedom Trail Clinic, Erich Lindemann Mental Health Center; and Instructor, Harvard Medical School. Gelenberg was Chief, Special Studies Clinic, MGH; and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School. Guggenheim was Chief, Psychiatric Consultation Liaison Division and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Southwest Medical School, Dallas, Texas. Gelenberg was eventually replaced by Dr. Don Goff.

Content Note:

Journal articles in the professional psychiatric literature that were considered sufficiently important by the editorial panel were summarized and critiqued in an “audio-journal,” consisting of tape recordings mailed to subscribers. Each recording was 90 minutes long (three-minute summary of 20 to 25 articles, plus a 15-minute guest commentary). Speakers were not in the same place at the same time. One of the editor’s responsibilities was to make the “conversations” seamless, as though all of the participants were together in the same room. Guest commentators included many leading figures in the profession, who spoke by invitation. Also included were a compact album for storing a full year’s series of tapes; a summary reference card about each article; and color-tabbed index dividers for filing and retrieval.

Abernethy edited 344 such recordings between 1976 and 2005. The collection consists of the recordings edited by Abernethy, chronologically arranged. A few issues are missing, presumably because they were loaned out and never returned. The recordings are identified by lists of topics and speakers and are supplemented by a small amount of promotional and explanatory material. The issues for 2004 and 2005 have been preserved with their original mailing packets, showing how each installment was received by subscribers. Each installment contained an audio cassette tape, which in later years was also accompanied by a CD duplicate of the tape. Approximately 3000 subscribers received the monthly packets. Advertising was not allowed.

Processing Note:

Cassettes found in their original albums have been left in place pending the future acquisition of better storage and preservation supplies. A comprehensive list of titles would be a useful, but no such list exists at this time.

Box List:

c. 1

Introductory literature

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 1-6 (April 1976-March 1982)

c. 2

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 7-12 (April 1982-December 1988)

c. 3

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 13-18 (January 1989-December 1994)

c. 4

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 19-23 (January 1995-February 2000)

c. 5

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 24-27 (March 2000-September 2003)

b. 6

“Practical Reviews in Psychiatry,” vols. 28-29, in original mailing packets (March 2004-January 2005)

NB: A list of topics and guest speakers for each month through February 1993 is attached to the MC 33 finding aid. More detailed lists are included as inserts in individual albums.