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Introduction

The purpose of this collection of papers is to describe the present state of development of Chapter V (F) of the Tenth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD–10) (to be published by the World Health Organization, Geneva), and to discuss some related issues concerning psychiatric classification in an international setting.

It is the responsibility of the World Health Organization, Geneva, to prepare and promulgate successive revisions of the whole of the ICD in a form suitable for international and national reporting of statistics of mortality and morbidity. The production of proposals for Chapter V of the ICD dealing with mental disorders is among the responsibilities of the Division of Mental Health, WHO, Geneva, whose Director, Dr Norman Sartorius, is the author of the first paper in this collection. He describes the international setting of the development of ICD–10, Chapter V (F) and its relation to the mental health programme of the Organization. Dr A. Jablensky discusses some of the theoretical aspects of classification in general and highlights some of the special problems that beset attempts to develop psychiatric classifications. Dr J. E. Cooper describes the main new features of ICD–10, Chapter V (F), and discusses the structure of current psychiatric classifications. Dr Burke provides a description of the Field Trials undertaken by WHO to test the ICD–10.

Two further papers have been contributed by Dr G. Bramer and Dr J. Mezzich. The former is the WHO officer responsible for the development of the whole ICD and provides a description of the process of its development. The latter is the Secretary of the Section on Classification and Nomenclature of the World Psychiatric Association who has worked with WHO in the development of the ICD and in particular in exploring ways to use the ICD in a multiaxial fashion. His paper describes the results of these explorations so far.

There are also two appendices. The first gives the listing of categories included in Chapter V and the second an example of the diagnostic guidelines drafted to facilitate the use of the chapter.

The work to be done on ICD–10 Chapter V (F) from now and until its official adoption by the World Health Assembly in 1990 is of the nature of consolidation and finalisation of the classification using the results of the extensive process of international consultation and Field Trials that have been in operation over the last few years. We hope that the publication of this supplement will bring the new revision of the classification and its background to the attention of the scientific community and of public health authorities, and in so doing facilitate the development of a common language which will enable all those concerned with mental health to understand each other and work together.

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