BOOK REVIEW

Hallucinations

By Oliver Sacks

New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2012, 323 pages, ISBN-13: 978-0307957245, list price: \$26.95 (hardcover), \$15.95 (paperback), also available in e-book format

Oliver Sacks is a neurologist and author who has penned multiple nonfiction volumes that chronicle the symptoms and science of neurological disease, with a focus on the patient's experience. In *Hallucinations*, he explores sensory experiences that originate in the brain rather than as a perception of the external environment. Visual, auditory, and olfactory experiences are considered in the context of sensory loss, sensory deprivation, neurological diseases such as parkinsonism, epilepsy, and migraine, drug-induced states, and sensory phantoms (e.g. limbs). Although he does not discuss dreams, attention is paid to both hypnagogic and sleep paralysis experiences. Delirium is addressed, though chronic psychiatric states are not.

Hallucinations is classified as a medical nonfiction book. However, it is neither a textbook nor a reference book. As is typical of Dr. Sacks's writing, the prose includes modern and historical anecdotes from both physician and patient perspectives, intertwined with

physiologic explanation. Physicians and scientists should not be dissuaded by the fact that a nonmedical audience can comprehend the text, as the content is anything but pedestrian.

Dr. Sacks's insights related to visual hallucinations are particularly germane to the clinical practice of neuro-ophthalmology. This book is likely to be of interest to clinicians and students who will gain an appreciation for the patient experience and find it a welcome respite from the scientific literature. It is likely to be of interest to patients, who will find comfort in reading about the similar experiences of others. *Hallucinations* recently became available in both paperback and e-book formats, making it easily accessible.

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