

Alcoholic Hallucinosi s and Schizophrenia: A Negative Study*

By MARC A. SCHUCKIT and GEORGE WINOKUR

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago Eugen Bleuler postulated a correlation between alcoholic hallucinosi s and schizophrenia. In his textbook, he stated his belief that 'alcoholic hallucinosi s could . . . be a mere syndrome of schizophrenia induced by alcohol (1)'.

If this were true, one would expect alcoholics with a history of hallucinosi s to show a course different from other alcoholics, a course loaded for schizophrenic-like symptoms. Further, since it is known that schizophrenia runs in families (2), alcoholics with hallucinosi s should show an increased familial incidence of schizophrenia. This paper examines the demographic parameters and family histories of alcoholics with a history of hallucinosi s.

METHOD

The patient material consisted of the 259 alcoholics previously reported by Winokur *et al.* (3). The major examination compared all probands having a history of alcoholic hallucinosi s with those lacking such a history. The final material consisted of 258 probands, as one patient had no information on hallucinations recorded during her interview.

The methods of proband selection and diagnostic criteria for all illnesses, including alcoholism and schizophrenia, have been outlined in the previous publication (3). The diagnosis of alcoholic hallucinosi s was made when hallucinations, usually auditory, occurred in an otherwise clear sensorium.

RESULTS

Demographic comparisons between the two proband groups are given in Table I. The probands with alcoholic hallucinosi s were more often primary alcoholics, had begun drinking younger, and were older at study, thus showing a longer course of alcoholism. They tended to have had more previous admissions to hospital, and were more often unemployed or unskilled labourers. The two groups

* This study was carried out in the Department of Psychiatry Washington University School of Medicine 4940 Audubon Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri, and was supported in part by U.S. Public Health Service-National Institute of Mental Health grants No. MH-09247, MH-5804, MH-7081, and MH-K3-18292.

TABLE I
Demographic parameters in 258 alcoholic probands

	Had hallucinosi s N = 61 %	No hallucinosi s N = 197 %
Race-Caucasian χ	51	82
Age at study 40+ ..	64	76
Primary diagnosis of alcoholism	75	66
Primary diagnosis of personality disorder	8	16
Job unskilled or unemployed χ ..	59	26
For males only (N = 40)	78(N = 116)	34
8 or more previous hospitalizations ..	18	7
First alcoholic age 35+ \checkmark	10	26
Alcoholic 20+ ..	34	32

Using χ^2 with Yates' correction for continuity:
 $\checkmark P < .025$.
 $\chi P < .0005$.

TABLE II
Family histories for 258 alcoholic probands

	Had hallucinosi s N = 61 %	No hallucinosi s N = 197 %
Father		
Alcoholic	36	30
AD	3	5
Schizophrenic ..	—	1
Mother		
Alcoholic	11	7
AD	16	15
Schizophrenic ..	—	1
Brothers	N = 92	N = 265
Alcoholic	22	26
AD	3	3
Schizophrenic ..	1	1
Sisters	N = 92	N = 247
Alcoholic	8	9
AD	12	10
Schizophrenic ..	—	1
Children	N = 58	N = 153
Alcoholic	5	6
AD	14	9
Schizophrenic ..	4	—

showed no differences in longest period of abstinence or in suicide attempts. As could be expected, significantly more of the hallucinosis group were admitted to hospital as a direct consequence of hallucinations, 22 per cent *versus* 1 per cent respectively. Only 1 per cent of each group had a previous diagnosis of schizophrenia.

The family histories of alcoholism, affective disorder (AD) and schizophrenia are shown in Table II. The family histories of the three groups are almost identical. No clear trend of increased illness in general or of increased rates for specific illnesses are seen.

CONCLUSION

Alcoholics presenting with a history of alcoholic hallucinosis were not distinguishable by a prior history of schizophrenia or by a high incidence of

schizophrenia within their families. Demographic factors indicated that they differed from other alcoholics by their long course of alcoholism along with many previous alcoholic admissions. This investigation lends no support to a theory linking alcoholism with hallucinosis to schizophrenia.

REFERENCES

1. BLEULER, E. (1916). *Textbook of Psychiatry* (Authorized translation 1924 by A. A. Brill), pp. 342-5. New York: The Macmillan Company.
2. KALLMANN, F. J. (1946). 'The genetic theory of schizophrenia.' *American Journal of Psychiatry*, **100**, 309-22.
3. WINOKUR, G. *et al.* (1970). 'Alcoholism III: Diagnosis and familial psychiatric illness in 259 alcoholic probands.' *Archives of General Psychiatry*, **23**, 104-11.

Marc A. Schuckit, M.D., *Chief President in Psychiatry, University of California, San Diego*
George Winokur, M.D., *Head of Department of Psychiatry, University of Iowa Medical School, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240*

(Received 9 June 1971)