

Attention and Schizophrenia: Neurobiological Bases.

By ROBERT D. OADES. London: Pitman. 1982. Pp 343. £22.00.

The author has made an heroic attempt to review all the literature which is pertinent either to the physiological basis of schizophrenia or to the physiological basis of attention. As a consequence he has provided a most valuable bibliography. However, so much information is provided that the task of integrating it into a coherent whole has proved impossible. In the three chapters Oades proposes that schizophrenia is primarily a disorder of "attention". This is a popular idea but although this book covers more evidence than before it remains unconvincing, particularly as 'attention' is never precisely defined. Indeed Oades spreads his net for experimental evidence so widely that the more general term 'cognition' might be more appropriate. Alongside his emphasis on attention the author considers that thought disorder is the key symptom of schizophrenia. Once again this term is used very non-specifically. Sometimes the term 'disorders of thinking' seem to be meant which, while not controversial, is too imprecise to be useful. At other times 'formal thought disorder' is implied. Recent work by Andreason and others suggests that this symptom is not shown by the majority of schizophrenics and is probably commoner in mania. For the remaining chapters the author considers in turn several brain areas (e.g. hippocampus, septum, etc.) and several neurotransmitter systems (e.g. dopamine, serotonin, etc.). A great deal of loosely related evidence is reviewed in each section. Ill-controlled and anecdotal studies are sometimes given equal weight with careful double-blind trials, but in spite of this no coherent theme emerges. So many aspects of the brain have been considered that the author can be sure that whatever the organic basis of schizophrenia turns out to be he will have covered it somewhere in his book.

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Biological Aspects of Schizophrenia and Addiction.

Edited by GWYNNETH HEMMINGS. Chichester: John Wiley. 1982. Pp 277. £18.50.

The Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain, a voluntary organisation dedicated to the promotion of biological research in schizophrenia, is well placed to explore some of the more controversial or less well-established hypotheses surrounding the subject. This book is based on papers presented at a conference organised by the Association.

Schizophrenia and addiction are connected via the endorphin system so that the review of endorphins in

schizophrenia (Terenius) is an appropriate starting point. Other topics in the section on pathogenesis include genetic control of catecholamines (Wetterberg), biologically active peptides in the urine of schizophrenics (Edminson), gonadotrophin secretion in chronic schizophrenia (Ferrier) and dopamine (Crow).

Food allergy inevitably makes an appearance and we learn that it is enhanced by smoking and the use of the contraceptive pill (Grant). Indeed the claim is made that 'addiction' to food or environmental chemicals is 'the central kingpin of the majority of emotional degenerative disorders' (Philpott).

A whole section is devoted to 'the exploration of a hypothesis' concerning the possible role of prostaglandins in the pathogenesis of schizophrenia. The recommended treatment derived from this hypothesis is γ -linolenic acid and penicillin, the effects of which on 10 patients are reported by Vaddadi. A hypothesis which depends on an alleged similarity between alcohol withdrawal states and schizophrenia and mediated by either deficiency or excess of prostaglandin E, (Horrobin) is, however, less than convincing.

Sections on endocrinology and pharmacology and addiction, including comprehensive reviews on the actions of cannabis (Ashton) and benodiazepine dependence (Lader) complete the book.

The papers included vary from the soberly scientific to the wildly speculative but most contrive to be interesting and stimulating. It is anyone's guess which of the various avenues presented will turn out to be blind alleys but full marks to the Schizophrenia Association for having the nerve to explore them.

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The Practice of Psychotherapy: 506 Questions and Answers. By LEWIS R. WOLBERG. New York: Brunner/Mazel. 1982. Pp 413. \$30.00.

Despite its title, this book is not a textbook of psychotherapy but a comprehensive description of Wolberg's own practice as a psychotherapist and psychiatrist. It is presented in a rather idiosyncratic form, being the 506 questions his students and others have most frequently asked, along with his answers.

The questions range from medically naive enquiries on the place of drugs in schizophrenia and the side effects of ECT to highly technical ones on aspects of psychoanalytic theory. The answers vary in length from a line or two to several pages, and whilst his style is admirably clear, some readers may find the catechism format irritating.