

Book Reviews

History of the Introduction of Lithium into Medicine and Psychiatry - Birth of Modern Psychopharmacology 1949

J. Schioldann, MD; Preface by G.E. Berrios, MD

Adelaide Academic Press, 363 pages

ISBN: 978-0-9805477-0-2

As medical professionals we have come to accept and rely on lithium therapy as one of the essential tools of modern psychiatry; however not many among us have tried to delve deeper into the history behind the emergence and acceptance of this therapy. It is widely accepted that the rediscovery of lithium's antimanic properties by John F. Cade has helped to establish the field of modern psychopharmacology. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the events which have led to this discovery will help us to better understand one of the forming events on which the modern psychiatric profession is based.

Professor Johan Schioldann, of the University of Adelaide, reveals a fascinating chapter of the early history of modern psychopharmacology. His meticulous study, often through the use of original sources which have not been researched before, tells the history of lithium therapy from the mid-19th century to John Cade's discovery, during the 1940s, of lithium's effects on patients with mood disorders. The tale behind the origins of John Cade's ideas provides us with further insight into the field

of modern psychopharmacology, which is one of the cornerstones of contemporary psychiatry.

The book is written in a style which makes it equally appealing to medical professionals and to laypeople interested in psychiatry, psychopharmacology, or the history of medicine. It is extremely well referenced and presents us with several original documents which allow us a unique perspective of the events which are being described. Although the work touches on several issues which are quite controversial from a nationalistic point of view, this is done with utmost regard for national sensitivities and respect for the accepted historical narrative.

The first part of the book gives an account of the early history of lithium therapy from its earliest applications as a gout remedy, within the context of the then accepted correlation between gout and mental illness, to the first documented uses of lithium in the treatment of mania by Carl and Fritz Lange in the 1850s.

The second part of the book gives a most detailed and meticulously researched account of John Cade's renewed discovery of the therapeutic properties of lithium and subsequent medical trials, and the controversies concerning the early uses of lithium in the treatment of manic disorders, as well as painting a portrait of the man himself both through his research and through accounts of his contemporaries.

This work is highly recommended for all who wish to obtain a deeper and more encompassing comprehension of the field of modern psychiatry and more particularly of modern psychopharmacology.

Igor Plopsi, Bat Yam

Reelin Glycoprotein: Structure, Biology and Roles in Health and Disease

S. Hossein Fatemi, editor

Springer, 2008, 443 pages

“Reelin glycoprotein is a major secretory protein with an important role in embryogenesis and during adult life,” starts S. Hossein Fatemi in the preface to his book on reelin, a truly masterful rollercoaster for the basic scientist, mainly on this molecule that has a deep impact on brain health and disease.

The book takes the reader through the chemistry, anatomy and molecular functions of reelin to its influence upon cognition, liver function and odontogenesis, proving it is a still much neglected but nevertheless essential molecule. It describes the homo and heterozygous mouse mutant to reelin, giving us, thus, the basic understanding for its major role. It relates to its function and lack in brain disease like lissencephaly, Alzheimer's disease, autistic disorder, stroke, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. For the clinician the book starts at Chapter 21 and ends at Chapter 27, about 100 pages on reelin causing the smooth (agryic) brain of lissencephaly or the synaptogenesis deficit postulated to be the basis of schizophrenia and its role in synaptic plasticity crucial for cognitive abilities. More so, it introduces the concept of impaired reelin/ApoE receptor dependent neuromodulation that might contribute to synaptic loss and cognitive deficit in Alzheimer's disease.

Graphically the book is exceptionally attractive, having a large number of colored and black and white figures and graphs. Didactically organized and chaptered it deals for its better part, two-thirds on basic science and a last third of preclinical studies.

I would warmly recommend it to the basic scientist on his way to understanding the “molecular brain” – a vivacious addition to tau and Apo E, in an era where we look at human brain diseases through mutant mice and mutated molecules. I would less warmly recommend it to the brain clinician as it relates only vaguely to therapeutic options for brain disease in Chapters 23-24.

Overall a mighty effort for what will prove to be a new significant molecule, or not.

Diana Paleacu, Bat Yam

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Across the Lifespan - An Integrative Approach

Michael E. Portman

Springer, 2009, Hardcover, pp. 182.

ISBN 978-0-387-89242-9

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a mental disorder characterized by excessive worry and anxiety that is difficult for the person to control. GAD causes significant disruption in the patient's life. Approximately 3% of people may develop the disorder during any given year, and up to 5% of people will suffer from GAD at some point in their lives.

Michael Portman's book on GAD is written for practicing clinicians, psychologists, social workers, researchers and even interested laymen. In a concise, but comprehensive form, the author reviews the major theories regarding GAD, as well as providing a comprehensive and balanced overview of the most recent research on the subject. In addition we are presented with a description of the main strategies and methodologies for treating this disabling and under-recognized condition.

The author, Michael Portman, DPhil, LISW-S, avails us with his extensive clinical experience, gained from his work as a clinical social worker and his private practice specializing in anxiety disorders, and his widely ranging knowledge of both the professional and empirical literature pertaining to the understanding and treatment of GAD and its definition as a separate disorder.

The book has eight chapters covering a wide range of subjects from the definition, history and the nature of GAD, the most current diagnostic tools, the better founded conceptual models regarding GAD, the various therapeutic approaches (both psychosocial and pharmacological), the specifics of treating various special needs groups such as minors and older adults, some less common issues, such as prevention and culture specific symptom clusters and finally the direction of future developments in the field of GAD.

The book is both user-friendly and informative. The writing is clear and the review is up to date. Both professionals and laypeople interested in the subject may benefit from reading this book.

Shelly Tadger, Bat Yam