

Editorial

In this issue Dr. William Shaw presents a hypothesis that three metabolites normally present in very small amounts are present in toxic quantities in some schizophrenic patients. These metabolites are methanethiol (from methionine) detergents, or free fatty acids, and/or lysoleci-thins and ammonia. Dr. Shaw presents a lot of evidence from pathology, biochemistry and from therapeutics of schizophrenia. His thesis deserves very careful attention.

Evidence he presents shows that lipid metabolism is altered in schizophrenics. A report by Hoffer and Callbeck (1957) presents evidence of different cholesterol metabolism. We found that nicotinic acid is more effective in decreasing cholesterol in normal subjects than in schizophrenics. After one day of treatment it lowered cholesterol from 212.6 to 203.2 mg (N = 38 patients), compared to a decrease from

203.9 mg to 190.0 mg (N = 43 normal subjects). These differences were significant. We also found that patients who did not respond to treatment of their psychosis had higher initial cholesterol levels and decreased less after nicotinic acid.

The schizophrenia syndrome becomes more complex each decade, suggesting it is not due to the accumulation of a single toxin; that it is due to a complex series of metabolic abnormalities, probably induced by modern dietary practices superimposed upon particular genetic vulnerability.

A. Hoffer, M.D., Ph.D.

Literature Cited

1. Hoffer A and Callbeck MJ: The hypercholesterolemic effect of nicotinic acid and its relationship to the autonomic nervous system. *Journal of Mental Sciences*, 103:810-820, 1957.