

Can Poor Health Ruin Your Mind? A Look Behind the Causes of Mental Illness

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When Linda J. began to hear voices and lose touch with reality, her husband did not know what to do. She was clearly losing her mind. He scrambled for help, seeking assistance from friends and family while trying to cope with the chaos of his wife's dwindling condition. One of his calls was to our office, Safe Harbor. We gave him our standard advice: ensure she is given a full, searching examination by a competent doctor who will LOOK for what is wrong.

We warned him that most doctors would not help him. This, sadly, turned out to be true. In searching for a full exam for his wife, he was told simply that Linda (not her real name) was a "catatonic schizophrenic." Normally, this "diagnosis" is a sentence to a lifetime on psychiatric drugs. Fortunately for Linda, her husband did not accept this expert advice. He persisted for months until he found a doctor who would look beyond the obvious behavior and investigate to find out why she was in this state.

The doctor examined a number of factors. He ordered something only recently available in biochemical analysis and still unused by many orthodox doctors: a 62-item organic acid test from Great Plains Laboratory. This test is commonly ordered to check for yeast and bacterial overgrowth, which can cause psychosis. But this time something unexpected showed up.

The citric acid in her urine was five times normal. This indicated a likely lack of a substance called glutathione, which is made of three amino acids and helps metabolize citric acid. The test also showed she was low on an amino acid called pyroglutamic acid. This, too, indicated a possible glutathione deficiency because pyroglutamic acid is derived from glutathione.

Linda was given a 250 mg. intravenous injection of glutathione along with calcium and magnesium. She received a vitamin B12 shot intramuscularly and was given oral supplements of glutathione and N-Acetyl-Cysteine. Glutathione tends to break down in the gut, therefore, one of its amino acid components, cysteine, is taken so the body can make glutathione.

By this point, seven months into her psychosis, Linda J. had become almost mute, speaking only once or twice a day. Thirty-six hours after treatment was begun, Linda J. got on the phone and spoke for an hour.

A month later she was completely recovered.

The Plight of the "Mentally Ill"

Linda's story is, unfortunately, a rare one. Every day thousands of people like her around the world

are not thoroughly examined. Instead they are admitted to psychiatric hospitals and started on psychiatric drugs when they are, in fact, physically ill.

Even more disturbing is the fact that this is not new news. In the May 1981 issue of the American Journal of Psychiatry, Richard Hall et al reported on their study of 100 consecutive psychiatric admissions to a research ward where patients were specifically examined first for medical problems. Eighty percent had physical illnesses requiring treatment. Forty-six percent had unrecognized ailments that either caused or exacerbated their mental problems.

The exams done in this study were not particularly extensive. Ninety percent of the medical problems were discovered from a workup that included:

1. A psychiatric and physical exam.
2. A standard urinalysis.
3. An electrocardiogram (ECG).
4. An electroencephalogram (EEG) after sleep deprivation.
5. An SMA-34 (a 34-item blood test).

The exams also didn't utilize a multitude of tests developed in recent years by alternative medicine which can detect physical sources of mental problems such as:

1. The organic acid urine test used in Linda's case.
2. Hair analysis and chelating agents which can detect heavy metal toxicity, among other things.
3. Tests for faulty nutritional metabolism (particularly those pioneered by the Pfeiffer Treatment Center in Naperville, Illinois).
4. Food allergy testing.
5. Essential fatty acid profiles.
6. Twenty-four-hour urine tests for hormones.
7. Blood tests for environmental toxins.

One begins to see that in the above study, with better tools, it's very likely that far more than 46% would have been found to have physically-induced mental problems.

The New Trend in Mental Health

This high rate of misdiagnosis of "mental illness" has not escaped the notice of many forward-thinking physicians. Our group, Safe Harbor, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public, the medical field, and government agencies on alternative mental health treatments. On our web site, AlternativeMentalHealth.com, which has become the world's largest site on this subject, we have a directory of doctors around the world who offer alternative treatments for mental health problems. The vast majority tell us they no longer view psychiatric diagnoses - such as schizophrenia and attention deficit disorder - as actual diseases. They generally see these as terms that describe behavior caused by a variety of non-psychiatric problems.

Some, like Dr. Lita Lee, author of *The Enzyme Cure*, will flat out tell you, "I have never believed that people 'just go nuts.' I have always believed that abnormal brain chemistry leading to mental

problems is a direct result of abnormal body chemistry, poor nutrition and hormonal imbalances. "

Most of these doctors also help take people off psychiatric drugs. We have found that taking children off of Ritalin has become an industry in itself amongst alternative physicians. Labeled with attention deficit disorder, these youngsters are commonly found instead to have food allergies, toxins in their systems, medical problems, and a host of other non-psychiatric situations.

Physical Sources of Mental Illness

All of us have experienced negative mental effects from physical sources. Too much caffeine can cause anxiety or too many sweets can give you the "sugar blues." And many women have endured mental disturbances as a result of hormonal changes during the menstrual cycle.

Neuropsychiatrist Dr. Sydney Walker - one of the country's leading authors and advocates on finding the physical causes of severe mental symptoms - narrowed "mental illness" down to something he called neuronal reductivism. In short, if a person experiences strange mental phenomena, a good doctor will reduce his investigation down to: What is impacting the neurons? It could be an infection, sleep disturbances, hormonal disorders, low oxygen, chronic pain or a host of other problems.

"There's no magic in any of this," Walker told a female patient who came to him with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. "The feelings you are having have to be coming from somewhere and we are going to find the causes." The woman was found to have, among other things, low blood sugar. She improved noticeably after three days of a change of diet.

The physical sources of mental symptoms fall into four general categories: medical, toxins, allergies, and nutrition.

Medical Causes

Medical causes include a vast array of standard physical problems such as Lyme Disease, certain forms of epilepsy, diabetes, hepatitis, and glandular malfunctions. Canadian Dr. Erwin Koranyi, reporting on this in the Archives of General Psychology in 1979, stated, "No single psychiatric symptom exists that cannot at times be caused or aggravated by various physical illnesses.

The thyroid gland alone, when malfunctioning, can create a vast range of mental phenomena from low mood to psychosis. The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologist openly states on its web site: "The diagnosis of subclinical or clinical hypothyroidism must be considered in every patient with depression."

Demonstrating how people can be labeled as crazy or depressed "for no apparent reason," a study reported in the Feb. 28, 2000, issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine revealed that of 25,000 people examined, nearly 10% had a thyroid problem they were unaware of.

Toxins

Toxins are becoming an ever-increasing source of concern in our modern-day world. Metals such as mercury and lead have longstanding reputations for causing severe mental problems. Mercury used

by hat makers in centuries past was so potent that the phrase "mad as a hatter" became a yardstick for insanity. The June 19, 2000, issue of U.S. News and World Report cited a study in which delinquent Pennsylvania youths were found to have significantly higher lead levels in their bones than non-delinquent youngsters.

Newer toxins like pesticides, cleaning chemicals, and air pollutants can also have a serious effect on one's mental state. In his book *Brain Allergies*, Dr. William Philpott tells of a man who became psychotic from roofing tar odors. Dr. Sherry Rogers discusses "toxic teacher syndrome" in *Depression Cured At Last*, with depression and brain fog topping the list of symptoms caused by poor ventilation and off-gassing of new carpet and construction materials.

Allergies

Allergies, particularly food allergies, are a common source of severe mental symptoms in adults and children. A landmark case was noted by Dr. Theron Randolph in 1949 when he saw a female patient go psychotic after eating beets. When she was retested, the insanity returned.

A woman wrote our office about her admission to a psychiatric hospital for depression at the age of eighteen. Months of psychiatric drug use followed. "Years later," she wrote, "I was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome as well as debilitating food allergies to foods I've eaten every day of my life! This was the true cause of my depression." After she addressed the real problem, "Life became brighter. I became motivated and optimistic. I began to feel like the old me from a long, long time ago."

In testing patients classified as "schizophrenic," Dr. William Philpott found that 92% reacted to one or more substances as follows:

- Wheat - 64%
- Mature corn - 51%
- Pasteurized whole cow milk - 50%
- Tobacco - 75% with 10% becoming grossly psychotic, with delusions, hallucinations, and, especially, paranoia
- Hydrocarbons - 30%. Weakness was common. Some participants reacted with delusions or suicidal inclinations.

Nutrition

"Some psychiatrists express their scorn for nutrient therapies, claiming they are too puny to have any real clinical potency," writes William Walsh, Ph.D., senior scientist for the Pfeiffer Treatment Center in Naperville, Illinois, a clinic on the forefront of nutritional treatment of severe mental symptoms. "My favorite response begins by asking the question, 'Where do our neurotransmitters come from?'"

Nutrition plays such a major role in mental health that it spawned the entire profession of orthomolecular psychiatry (ortho = right or correct). Remarkable discoveries of nutrient deficiencies and overloads led to successful drugless treatments for the worst of psychiatry's burden, the "schizophrenics."

Orthomolecular pioneer Dr. Abram Hoffer developed a supplement regimen tested on thousands of patients (available at www.AlternativeMentalHealth.com) which he claimed recovered 90% of those with early-stage schizophrenia.

No "mental illness" exists which has not been treated successfully to some degree with nutritional supplements.

In the elderly, deficiencies represent a common cause of mental disturbance. As many as one in four people over 60 may have a B12 shortage and the odds increase with each decade of age. Vitamin B12 deficiency can cause moodiness, depression, memory loss, dizziness, and dementia - all common symptoms of "growing old." If caught early enough, the symptoms normally vanish with supplementation.

Summary

The moral of this story is: If you're having a severe mental disturbance, you may not want to call a psychiatrist first. You might just be physically ill.

Like Linda's husband at the beginning of this article, you may want to find yourself a good forward-thinking doctor you can trust - one who will not simply put a label on your symptoms and send you home with something to numb you to the world. Your health - and your future - could be the better for it.