

J. Seckler

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Dr. S. D. Thornton
Publishing Editor, Life Sciences
John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
Chichester, Sussex, England

Dear Dr. Thornton,

I am pleased to respond to your letter of 27 November regarding the proposed volume by Drs. Green and Costain. First off, the material sent me was an outline of a volume and the details are too skimpy to allow a detailed assessment of this volume's potentials against others in the field; but the material is sufficient to allow a general assessment.

My initial impression of the outline was that the topics are well within the skills of the authors. In the past two years, I have come to regard the workers in Oxford as among the more sophisticated in the field. I regard their knowledge of the role of catecholamines in behavior, and the relations between brain chemistry and behavior, very highly. In the outline, I believe that they should have no difficulty in presenting the chapters in Section 1 (Neurotransmitters) ably and clearly. I presume that they will emphasize the relations between human and animal studies. If they include tables and figures which state clearly what was discerned in animal trials, what was confirmed in human trials, and where the discrepancies between the two domains of inquiry exist, they will be doing the science a distinct service. There is much confusion among the scientists who seem particularly facile in jumping from one domain to another, leaving the careful listener and reader rather breathless from the exertion of separating the two types of data.

The outline of the chapters dedicated to clinical psychopathologic states projects an important contribution to the field. Were they to document reliably the many studies in humans, summarizing the psychiatric, biochemical and pharmacologic data, again they would be doing us all a service. Among the contributions that they cite, they omit two prior efforts at this consolidation of the clinical and laboratory findings-- the volumes by Baldessarini and by van Praag. Both these authors have presented simple and straightforward summaries of the clinical and laboratory data. Baldessarini's volume is particularly useful for medical students, for whom it was designed. Dr. van Praag's is more technical and less readable, but more detailed.

In reviewing the list of psychopathologic states, I noted some important omissions: the special problems of children and adolescents, the elderly, and the adults with psychoneuroses. There are important topics among each of these specialized populations which ought to be considered. It is probably true that the findings among these populations are particularly sparse, and that may be the reason for the omission, but a text for students should include some statements about the special problems in metabolism among the elderly, the sensitivity among children, and the theories and studies among anxiety cases (i.e., lactate precipitated anxiety, beta blockers, anti-hypertensives).

As to the specific questions. There is a need for additional volumes which can be used in teaching basic psychiatry to medical students and residents. At this University, I am charged with the responsibility of teaching psychopharmacology to medical students. In the past few years I have used Freedman and Kaplan's Textbook of Psychiatry; the volumes by Lance Simpson, Baldessarini, and lately, the one edited by Barchas et al. I have not been satisfied by any of these texts, and believe that there is a need for an elementary text of the type proposed by Green and Costain. For advanced students, I have been pleased this past semester with the new volume on Psychopharmacology published by Raven Press.

The authors' outline is a good one, and would suggest that you ask them to flesh out their outline with more details as to the specific approaches which they hope to use, perhaps even going so far as to ask for a preliminary draft of one section. That should give you and your reviewers somewhat more to go on.

As I understand their mission, the primary market would be the medical students in courses in psychobiology and first year medical post-graduates in psychiatric residency training programs. The secondary markets always include the broad range of psychopharmacologists, chemists, behavioral psychologists and neurologists who are interested in brain-behavior relationships.

I am only directly acquainted with my own course, and believe I have answered this question earlier.

The only volumes which are to be added to the list submitted are those by Baldessarini and by van Praag. There are others published and apparently used (Abel, Valzelli, Clark & Del Guidice, Iversen & Iversen) but none are in use here. For the most part, these are more general texts. I have no knowledge of manuscripts in preparation; nor am I knowledgeable about the market for such ventures.

I trust these comments are helpful. Should you obtain a more detailed outline, I would be pleased to encourage them and review it.

Sincerely yours,

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Professor of Psychiatry