

December 14, 1987

Morris A. Lipton, M.D.  
Deputy Editor, American Journal of Psychiatry  
1400 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Morry,

It was a pleasure to talk with you in San Juan. On my return, I read the letter by Lieber on the "Treatment of Rapid Cycling Bipolar Patients" in the latest issue of the AJP. The letter recommends complex polypharmacy as a treatment of therapy resistant depression. But the letter gives no data as to patient characteristics, history, in-patient or out-patient status, assessment of efficacy of treatments, trials with established treatments, etc. The letter seems to be a throwback to the old-fashioned testimonial which modern psychopharmacology eschews.

As the letter is published in the Journal, it suggests that the practice has met peer review standards of the Journal and the Association. Do spontaneous letters, not submitted in response to an article in the Journal, meet the peer-review standards of Journal articles? Was this letter reviewed by any of the acknowledged psychopharmacologists of the Board of Editors? If yes, is there a message in the letter that our attitude to polypharmacy should change?

If no, would you consider soliciting letters to argue against the adoption of the Lieber recommendations until they have met established standards of study for efficacy and safety?

While polypharmacy is a fact of practice, as we often read in the malpractice records which come our way, polypharmacy is not generally condoned by our experience or by our science. Is the publication of this letter not a regrettable mis-step?

My best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry