

Preface

Over 60 years ago, chlorpromazine dramatically changed our understanding and treatment of patients suffering from schizophrenia. Clozapine reemerged over 20 years ago, representing both our most effective drug for refractory schizophrenia and most vexing in terms of its disadvantages. While some would argue that there has been little progress since, an enormous amount of research into the underlying pathoetiology of schizophrenia has been conducted. This body of knowledge sets the stage for future progress in:

- Parsing out the heterogeneity associated with the umbrella term “schizophrenia,” allowing for subgroups to emerge with major implications for more effective treatment approaches.
- Early identification of at-risk individuals who may be prophylactically treated to prevent or attenuate the disease process.
- Developing therapies which are more targeted and less deleterious in terms of unwanted effects.
- Translating symptom reduction into improved functionality and quality of life.

At present, the most promising initiatives to facilitate these goals are in the areas of genetics, neuroimaging, and psychosocial rehabilitation approaches.

This book is divided into four sections. Part I summarizes our present state of knowledge about the diagnosis and treatment of schizophrenia. Part II considers recent discoveries into its pathoetiology, including the status of biological markers, genetics, and neuroimaging as they relate to diagnosis and potential novel therapeutic approaches. Part III explores the optimization of our present therapeutic approaches, novel treatments, and management of the substantial risks associated with both the illness and its present therapies. Part IV discusses progress in the long-term management of schizophrenia, focusing on biological and psychotherapeutic strategies to improve functioning and facilitate recovery. Finally, Part V considers future directions and predictions of how diagnosis and treatment of schizophrenia will change.

While the sense of being in a “holding pattern” is inevitable given the pace of progress in the clinical arena, there is also a growing recognition that the significant strides taken in basic research will usher in a second renaissance in the care of patients suffering from schizophrenia.

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