

Editorial Preface

WOLFGANG BÖKER and HANS D. BRENNER

The International Symposia on Schizophrenia held at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Bern in 1985 and 1987 corroborated the assumption of vulnerability, stress and coping as determining factors for onset, remission or relapse, and for resulting social adjustment or disability in schizophrenic disorders. However, to date, little is known about the complex inter-relationships between biologically based vulnerability, environmental and personality influences, and the coping potential of the affected individual in determining the course of the disorder and its outcome. Only research which has moved away from a linear and causal approach towards a dynamic systems approach can open out new vistas in this venture.

Current efforts to elaborate a developmental systems model still have to overcome major practical difficulties. Nevertheless, a growing number of prospective studies have paved the way for viable models for some domains which remain partial rather than integral. This pertains to research conducted on the development of schizophrenia in high-risk groups as well as to longitudinal studies of first-episode or chronic schizophrenics.

For example, investigations into the interactions between genetic factors, environmental influences, and psychopathology in high-risk groups could be mentioned in this connection, as well as endeavours to study the covariation between indicators of vulnerability, influences from family life, and psychopathology over time, or studies on the interactions among family atmosphere, psychosocial treatment, pharmacotherapy, and psychopathological as well as social aspects of the course of the disease.

This supplement reports the Third International Symposium on Schizophrenia on Transactional Processes in the Development and Course of

Schizophrenic Disorders that was held at the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Bern in October 1990. It contains both written versions of papers presented at the conference and updates on the theme, and is a continuation of the 1986 and 1989 reports on the two previous Bern Symposia. The topics covered range from risk factors, vulnerability and the influence of stress factors on relapse and course of illness through the impact of coping behaviour to questions concerning therapeutic possibilities of influencing the outcome of illness while taking into account the impact of transactional processes involved.

We would like to thank all the authors for their contributions and for their great cooperation in the writing of their articles according to our suggestions and requests. A German edition of this volume will be published by Hans Huber Publishers in Bern.

We express our special thanks to Frances Stirnemann who took on the task of reading through and co-editing the manuscripts with great care and circumspection. We are also deeply indebted to Professor Hugh Freeman for his understanding, guidance, and advice, and for his final editing of all the contributions submitted.

We would also like to thank Christine Haas and Lisa Moret for their great commitment and admirable patience in all the extensive and laborious paperwork. Our thanks thus go to the many who immeasurably assisted the Editors in making this supplement come true.

We hope that this supplement about The Third Bern Symposium on Schizophrenia will be as widely read as the earlier ones, and will promote the translation of a multidisciplinary and systemic approach to understanding individuals suffering from schizophrenia into therapeutic action.