Book Review

Recovery from the Hell of Schizophrenia
Carlene Hope,
Introduction by Abram Hoffer, M.D.
Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press

“When you are sick of sickness, you are no longer sick,” says a Chinese proverb. This is all the more true if you have found a way out of the illness. For the family locked in a 24-hour a day struggle with a child's schizophrenia, Recovery from the Hell of Schizophrenia will be both very familiar, and very encouraging reading.

The book is composed of four sections. Part One is an extensive autobiographical prologue. While granting that it sets the stage, to me the strength of the book begins on page 46, as the author's son first exhibits symptoms of mental illness. Part Two is the story of the disease's progression, failed pharmaceutical attempts to contain it, and eventual success with orthomolecular megavitamin therapy. While the narrative is from a mother's vantage point, Part Two concludes with a question and answer session with the patient, and Part Three is entirely devoted to the father's perspective. Part Four is a digest of quotes and passages from seminal orthomolecular writings, introducing the work of Abram Hoffer, Carl C. Pfeiffer, and others.

The author holds little back, describing her experiences with nearly cathartic intensity. But even better, she thoughtfully and repeatedly points the reader to available nutritional solutions. Lists of specific nutrients and doses are provided. She also includes her son's medication reduction diary, and is up front about the fact that although drugs alone were far from curative (and the side effects debilitating), some medication did prove helpful when taken in concert her son's nutritional program. I like the way the author itemizes and dates specific behavior improvements. Most readers would likely agree that the book would benefit from an index.

Any science teacher who has taught metrics will not be surprised to see that the book contains a repeated unit of measurement error. On pages 97, 128 and 132, the recommended selenium dose is stated as 100 "mgs" (milligrams) twice daily when it should be 100 mcg (micrograms). This is not a nit-pick, since the difference is a factor of 1,000. 200 micrograms of selenium/day is beneficial and completely safe. 200 milligrams/day (200,000 mcg) would be neither. All other nutrient doses are stated accurately.

The overriding value of this book is its simple, sometimes impassioned, but always unmistakable testimony: vitamin therapy works. Having lived this, the author describes her previously hospitalized but now recovered son: “You would never know by looking at him today that he has ever suffered from this disease. Our son is driving. He cooks for himself. He prepares his vitamin packets and takes them on schedule. He no longer sleeps and lives on the couch. He handles his checkbook flawlessly.” And, perhaps the most moving maternal comment of all: “He never asks me why I brought him into this world anymore.”

So another Chinese proverb comes to mind: “The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it.” Results say everything. Recovery from the Hell of Schizophrenia is an uncomplicated presentation of simple, safe, and effective niacin-based nutrition therapy, aptly described by the author as “Hoffer's Key.” This is the right book for any family that has never known they had a nutritional option, that never had the chance to try it and change their lives with orthomolecular medicine.

-Review by Andrew W. Saul