BOOK REVIEW

Experimental Approaches to Anxiety and Depression. J.M. Ellitt, D.J. Heal and C.A. Marsden (Eds), John Wiley, 1992.

This volume consists of the proceedings of the 41st Biological Council Symposium on Drug Action held in London in April 1991. The volume is dedicated to the work of Professor Merton Sandler who provides the first chapter, a historical overview of anxiolytic and antidepressant drug development, tellingly prefaced with a quote from *Brave New World*. There follow chapters by a veritable hall of fame of authors of international stature in the research world of anxiety and depression from clinicians through clinician-scientists to basic scientists.

This is an excellent book. Unusually for a symposium proceedings it has been skilfully edited and has a uniformly high quality of contributions most of which are good, up-to-date reviews of a rapidly changing experimental literature.

An underlying theme of the book is the increasingly recognized clinical and neurochemical overlap between anxiety and depressive syndromes. The clinical approach

is set out by Peter Tyrer in the second chapter. There follow chapters by behavioural scientists who examine animal models of anxiety and depression, including Sandra File who reviews her work on the behavioural detection of the action of anxiolytics. Trevor Robbins contributes a provocative chapter looking at the validity of animal models of mental illness including anxiety and depression. Bill Deakin reviews the current literature on aiming mechanisms in anxiety and depression and up-to-date reviews of the role of GABA, noradrenergic and serotonergic mechanisms, including a chapter by David Nutt and colleagues, are also included.

I can strongly recommend this volume to library collections and to individuals keen to get a succinct update on the experimental neurobiology of anxiety and depression. The past three years have seen the arrival of a range of novel anxiolytics and antidepressants, many of which combine efficacy with safety in an unprecedented way. Currently 25% of the NHS drugs budget goes on antidepressant drugs and the scientific rationale for current and future drug developments is outlined in this book.

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