Secondary Schizophrenia
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Edited by

Perminder S. Sachdev
Scientia Professor of Neuropsychiatry, School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales
Director, Neuropsychiatric Institute, Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick
New South Wales, Australia

Consulting Editor

Matcheri S. Keshavan
Stanley Cobb Professor and Vice Dean for Public Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center,
and Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts, USA
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Contributors

Osvaldo P. Almeida MD PhD FRANZCP FFPOA
Director of Research
Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing (WACHA),
Western Australian Institute for Medical Research;
Consultant, Department of Psychiatry
Royal Perth Hospital;
and Professor and Chair of Geriatric Psychiatry
School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences,
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences,
University of Western Australia,
Perth, Australia

Henry Brodaty MB BS MD DSc FRACP FRANZCP
Professor
Primary Dementia Collaborative Research Centre,
School of Psychiatry,
University of New South Wales;
and Aged Care Psychiatry,
Euroa Centre, Prince of Wales Hospital,
Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

Rebecca Anglin MD
Resident
Joint Program of Neurology and Psychiatry,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Alan S. Brown MD MPH
Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and
Clinical Epidemiology
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University,
New York State Psychiatric Institute,
New York, New York, USA

Vivek Benegal MD DPM
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
Deaddiction Centre,
National Institute of Mental Health and
Neurosciences (NIMHANS),
Bangalore, India

Monte S. Buchsbaum MD
Professor of Psychiatry
Neuroscience PET Laboratory,
Mount Sinai School of Medicine,
New York, New York, USA

Margaret N. Berry MS CGC
Department of Pediatrics
Section on Medical Genetics,
Wake Forest University School of Medicine,
Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA

William Burke PhD
Emeritus Professor of Physiology
Brain Research Laboratory,
Discipline of Anatomy and Physiology,
School of Medical Sciences and Bosch Institute,
The University of Sydney,
New South Wales, Australia

Nash N. Boutros MD
Professor
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral
Neurosciences,
Wayne State University School of Medicine
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Kim Burns RN BPysch (Hons)
Research Psychologist
Academic Department for Old Age Psychiatry,
Prince of Wales Hospital, Euroa Centre,
Randwick, New South Wales, Australia
Contributors

Stanley V. Catts
Professor
School of Medicine,
The University of Queensland;
and Mental Health Centre,
The Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital,
Herston, Queensland, Australia

Vibeke S. Catts BS MD FRANZCP
School of Medicine,
The University of Queensland,
St. Lucia, Queensland, Australia

Jennifer M. Connolly BSc (Hons)
Research Manager
Kavanagh Research Group,
Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation,
Queensland University of Technology,
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

David L. Copolov MB BS PhD DPM MPM FRACP
FRANZCP
Professor of Psychiatry
Monash University;
and Professor of Psychiatry
University of Melbourne,
Melbourne, Australia

Louisa Degenhardt BA (Hon) (Psych) MPsychol (Clinical) PhD
Professor of Epidemiology
National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre,
University of New South Wales,
Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

Stewart L. Einfeld MD DCH FRANZCP
Chair of Mental Health
Faculty of Health Sciences;
Senior Scientist
Brain and Mind Research Institute,
University of Sydney,
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Anthony Feinstein MPhil PhD FRCPC
Professor
Department of Psychiatry,
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre,
University of Toronto,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Matt P. Galloway PhD
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences,
Neuropsychiatry Division,
Wayne State University School of Medicine,
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Bangalore N. Gangadhar MD
Professor and Head
Department of Psychiatry,
National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS),
Bangalore, India

Wayne Hall BSc (Hons) PhD AM
Professor of Public Health Policy
School of Population Health,
University of Queensland,
Herston, Queensland, Australia

Malcolm Hopwood MD FRANZCP
Director
Veterans’ Psychiatry Unit;
and Director,
Brain Disorders Program,
Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital,
Heidelberg West, Victoria, Australia

Michael D. Jibson MD PhD
Professor
Director of Residency Education,
Department of Psychiatry,
University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Ripu D. Jindal MD
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

David J. Kavanagh
Professor
School of Psychology and Counselling;
and Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation,
Queensland University of Technology,
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Sophie Kavanagh BMed FRANZCP
Croydon Health Group,
Sydney South West Area Health Service,
Croydon, New South Wales, Australia
Contributors

Matcheri S. Keshavan
Stanley Cobb Professor
and Vice Chair for Public Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry,
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center,
and the Massachusetts Mental Health Center,
Harvard Medical School,
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Ennapadam S. Krishnamoorthy MD PhD FRCP
Director and TS Srinivasan Chair
The Institute of Neurological Sciences,
Voluntary Health Services Hospital,
Chennai, India

Rajeev Kumar MD FRANZCP PhD
Assistant Professor and Consultant Psychiatrist
Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry Unit, and
Academic Unit of Psychological Medicine,
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine,
National University of Singapore,
Singapore, Singapore

Alexandra F. Kurz MD
Head
Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy,
Klinikum rechts der Isar,
Technische Universität Munchen,
Munich, Germany

Nicola T. Lautenschlager MD FRANZCP
Professor and Chair of Psychiatry of Old Age
Department of Psychiatry,
University of Melbourne,
St. George's Campus,
St. Vincent's Hospital,
Kew, Victoria, Australia
Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing (WACHA);
School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences,
University of Western Australia,
Perth, Australia

Edward C. Lauterbach MD FANPA DFAPA
Professor of Psychiatry, Neurology and Radiology;
Director
Neurodegenerative Disease Program;
Chief
Division of Adult and Geriatric Psychiatry,
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences,
Mercer University School of Medicine,
Macon, Georgia, USA

Leslie Lester-Burns, BS
Mercer University College of Liberal Arts
Macon, Georgia, USA

Lyn-May Lim MB BS MPsych FRANZCP Cert POA
St. George's Hospital,
Kew, Victoria, Australia

Jeffrey C. L. Looi MBBS FRANZCP MRACMA
Director
Research Centre for the Neurosciences of Ageing (RESCENA);
and Associate Professor and Deputy Head
Academic Unit of Psychological Medicine,
Australian National University Medical School,
The Canberra Hospital,
Canberra, Australia

Michael Mazurek MD
Associate Professor
Department of Neurology,
McMaster University,
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Serge A. Mitelman MD
Assistant Professor of Psychiatry
Mount Sinai School of Medicine,
Neuroscience Positron Emission Tomography Laboratory,
New York, New York, USA

Ramon Mocellin MB BS MSc MMEd FRANZCP
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist
Neuropsychiatry Unit,
Royal Melbourne Hospital;
Research Fellow
Melbourne Neuropsychiatry Centre,
University of Melbourne,
Melbourne, Australia

Bryan Mowry MB BS BA (Hons) MD FRANZCP
Professor
Queensland Brain Institute,
University of Queensland,
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia;
and Executive Director
Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research,
The Park – Centre for Mental Health,
Wacol, Queensland, Australia
Contributors

Kim T. Mueser PhD
Professor of Psychiatry and Community and Family Medicine
Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

Anand K. Pandurangi MBBS MD
Professor of Psychiatry, Medical Director, and Chairman
Division of Inpatient Psychiatry, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, USA

Eric M. Pihlgren PhD
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences, Neuropsychiatry Division
Wayne State University School of Medicine
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Seethalakshmi Ramanathan MBBS DPM
Clinical Research Fellow
Department of Psychiatry, KEM Hospital, Mumbai, India

Patricia I. Rosebush MScN MD FRCP(C)
Professor
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Perminder S. Sachdev MD PhD FRANZCP
Scientia Professor of Neuropsychiatry
School of Psychiatry
University of New South Wales; Director
Neuropsychiatric Institute, Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

Richard D. Sanders MD
Associate Professor
Departments of Psychiatry and Neurology, Boonschoft School of Medicine and Wright State University and the VA Medical Center
Dayton, Ohio, USA

Vandana Shashi MD
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Department of Pediatrics, Section on Medical Genetics, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA

Arabella Smith MBBS DipRCPath FHGSA FRCPA
Department of Cytogenetics, Children's Hospital Westmead, Westmead, New South Wales, Australia

Sergio E. Starkstein MD FRANZCP
Professor of Psychiatry
School of Psychiatry, University of Western Australia
Perth, Australia

Ezra S. Susser MD
Department Chair, Epidemiology, and Anna Cheskiis Gelman and Murray Charles Gelman Professor of Epidemiology Mailman School of Public Health; Professor of Psychiatry College of Physicians and Surgeons; and Co-Director Statistics and Epidemiology, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavior Studies (NYSPI), New York, New York, USA

Rajiv Tandon MD
Professor of Psychiatry
University of Florida College of Medicine, McKnight Brain Institute, Gainesville, Florida, USA

Jagadisha Thirthalli MD
Associate Professor of Psychiatry
National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, India

Bruce J. Tonge MBBS MD DPM FRANZCP
Professor Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia
Contributors

Julian Trollor MB BS MD FRANZCP MFPOA
Chair, Intellectual Disability Mental Health
School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales;
and Staff Specialist
Neuropsychiatric Institute,
Prince of Wales Hospital, Euroa Centre,
Randwick, New South Wales, Australia

Dennis Velakoulis MB BS FRANZCP
Clinical Director
Melbourne Neuropsychiatry Centre,
North Western Mental Health and
University of Melbourne;
Director
Neuropsychiatry Unit,
Royal Melbourne Hospital,
Parkville, Victoria, Australia

Mark Walterfang MB BS (Hons) FRANZCP
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist
Neuropsychiatry Unit,
Royal Melbourne Hospital;
and Research Fellow
Neuroimaging Laboratory,
Melbourne Neuropsychiatry Centre, University of
Melbourne,
Carlton South, Victoria, Australia

Jane Zhang PhD
Mount Sinai School of Medicine,
New York, New York, USA
For any mental health researcher, finding the cause of schizophrenia would be the ultimate prize. The impact of schizophrenia on our society is immense. Even though it is a low-prevalence disorder relative to depression and anxiety disorders, it has captured the focus of most psychiatric services worldwide. It devastates individuals in the prime of their lives and overwhms families by its persistent challenge to most things we hold dear about our social existence. For researchers, it is the ultimate challenge and the most frustrating snare. It has a bewitching presence that many find too tempting to resist. Yet, it gives away few secrets. Neuropathologists, who recognize that it is a brain disease, have long regarded it as their graveyard. Neuroscientists often come away with the feeling that they are clutching at straws.

Some of us would like to believe that the answer, once we do stumble upon it, will be simple indeed. Perhaps we are only one step away from a gene that will unravel the mystery. Maybe a misfolded protein will open its cloak to reveal its nakedness. Many others believe, however, that the answer will never be simple – schizophrenia, after all, is about our very nature as human beings and what can go wrong with our existence. My own position is somewhere in between. I believe that eventually we will find genetic determinants of the brain abnormalities that underlie schizophrenia. This will help us understand that what we now regard as schizophrenia is a potpourri of disorders. There may well be many phenocopies of the true schizophrenia. On the other hand, there may not be a real schizophrenia in any case, but a medley of disorders we naively lump together.

This book is about chipping away at the large lump we presently call schizophrenia. The defining characteristics are broad indeed – the presence of delusions and hallucinations in clear consciousness. A quick browse through the leaves of this book will convince you that the brain responds to many injuries and threats with this response. It could be electrical discharges, traumatic injury, subtle beginnings of neurodegeneration, or the effects of psychoactive drugs. The list is mind-boggling, and each presents a slightly different mechanism of its causation. Could it be that the brain has a limited repertoire of responses to multiple challenges, and schizophrenia is that final pathway? The hope of this book is that many little secrets about schizophrenia will be revealed so that there is nowhere for it to hide. Psychiatry has a proud tradition of arguing about terminology, but I decided to stick with the DSM-IV refuge of secondary schizophrenia in this book. It has much to commend it, as discussed in one of the chapters. More than anything else, it makes no false pretense and recognizes our ignorance.

This book has been a collective effort. I am grateful to all the contributors not only for the hours of labor, but also for the infinite patience for the long delays in bringing it to fruition. There are very few experts on secondary schizophrenia. The writing of the chapters has therefore taken many authors outside their comfort zones, and the results are consequently more exciting. In particular, I would like to thank Matcheri Keshavan for his wisdom and generosity in guiding various aspects of the book. His consultations have left me in a considerable debt of gratitude. As always, my assistant Angie Russell has been tenacious in her determination to complete her project, and has worked untiringly to give me editorial support. She accepted that not all contributors would follow the guidelines for submission, and had the unenviable task of changing reference styles and crossing the ‘t’s. It is as much her book as that of the authors. The Cambridge University Press has been a solid backer throughout the process. The life of this manuscript has seen a number of changes in the editorial staff, but their support has been unwavering.
Preface

In the age of electronic publishing and rapid communication, this book is but a tortoise. I hope that it will hold steadfast, and intermittently poke its little head out to urge all players to move on. The road is long and there is no time to rest.

Perminder Sachdev
Sydney, Australia