recommended reading

To the Editor

With regard to your request for suggestions about selected representative readings on schizophrenia, may I recommend the recently published Themes and Variations in European Psychiatry (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974) by S. R. Hirsch and M. Shepherd. This book is an anthology of translations of the writings of such European authors as Kraepelin, Schneider, Bonhoeffer, Jaspers, and Kretschmer, with a foreword by Lothar Kalinowsky. It does not deal specifically with schizophrenia but with various theories as to the organic and functional etiology of mental illnesses.

I found a lot of unexpected things in the book. I had anticipated that it would serve to reinforce my organophilic viewpoint of psychiatry, but the opposite occurred. Before reading this anthology, I had had no idea that these European writers paid any attention to environmental, social, or psychological factors. Themes and Variations in European Psychiatry served to correct much of my ignorance.

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Richmond, Va.

a plea for treatment alternatives

To the Editor:

After reading the letters in At Issue (Schizophrenia Bulletin, No. 7, Winter 1973), I feel that perhaps you or some one of your readers can help me in my dilemma. My 35-year-old brother has been in State institutions for over 15 years, and the doctors claim he is a schizophrenic. Some years ago, my mother was told that shock treatments might benefit my brother, and she, thinking she was helping him, blissfully signed papers permitting this procedure. The treatments seemed to cause some brain damage—but the doctors said he was born with it. I really don’t know, except that he was left with a reflex that turns his head to the side and is worse off than he was before.

Today, it seems that my brother has regressed and not progressed. When I asked the doctor what we, as a family, could do, he gave me a verbal runaround, telling me what was being done in the whole institution for all the patients, how little funds they had, and how many patients he had. I asked this doctor specific questions about my brother’s diet, therapy, and medication, but he only responded with generalizations that didn’t give me a thing to hold onto . . . . It left me frustrated.

From my observation of this institution, all the mental illnesses of the world were thrown together in one ward. I feel that my brother needs peace and quiet (as we all do at times). The confusion of that kind of environment would make a mentally stable person unstable.

We are not rich people, but we are concerned about my brother and would like to know where he can receive individual care and help. I know he cannot return to our mother, since that was his problem to begin with—he was trying to run away from home. But I feel he does need a “homelike” atmosphere.

I hope that someone can offer concrete suggestions on how we can help my brother.

Edna Henry
Palmer, Alaska

national book award

Interpretation of Schizophrenia, by Silvano Arieti, has been chosen to receive the National Book Award for the most distinguished book published in the category of Science in 1974. This 756-page work is a thoroughly revised and greatly expanded second edition of Dr. Arieti’s book of the same title, originally published in 1955. Interpretation of Schizophrenia is published by Basic Books, Inc. (10 E. 53 St., New York, N.Y. 10022), and sells for $22.50 a copy.