

Book Review

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Winning the Battle. Janet Tiffany, Coolink Publishing Ltd., Cranbrook, B.C., Canada. Softcover, 299 pages, 1998.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is a vexatious, damaging and, all too often, lethal condition. It causes immense losses to society because those who suffer from it are almost always those who would be making the maximum contribution were they well.

The problem is that it is a syndrome, i.e. a collection of illnesses with a common presentation, albeit with enormous variations from individual to individual, and from time to time. In that it is very similar to schizophrenia. There is another similarity: Orthodox psychiatrists treat both as if they were single diseases, rather than syndromes, even though there is no evidence that the management which they recommend for both is more effective than leaving patients alone. As far as CFS is concerned they presume that it is Depression (ignoring that most CFS patients do not fulfill the criteria for Depression) and prescribe antidepressants and cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). Antidepressants are a part of the management of CFS in many patients but are far from curative. Claims are made for the effectiveness of CBT but I have never seen any evidence of the standard by which the orthodoxy judge the efficacy of other therapies to suggest that it is anything other than a means of bullying patients into trying ignore the fact that they are physically collapsing every time they are stressed –especially by those who dismiss CFS as if it were some kind of religion.

Janet Tiffany refused to accept the denial of the existence of the illness which was sapping all her emotions, strength, cognitive abilities, and capacity to achieve any quality in life. The perfect “Responsible Patient,” she took informed medical advice as the basis of further researches by herself to find the combination of therapies which restored her to as close to reason-

able health as she could hope to attain. Then she did something even better. She wrote a book about the avenues which she explored as an aid to others to find their own means to salvation from CFS. She took a multifaceted approach of which Orthomolecular Medicine was the essential core, the lynch pin, with its emphasis on diet, vitamins (niacin especially) and other nutrients, the role of *Candida albicans*, and the elimination of toxins. Surrounding this was a shell of considerations such as thyroid hormones, parasites, fluid balance, appropriate exercises and herbs.

So rapidly is the research in the field of CFS developing that it is impossible to cover the field entirely. And there are gaps in this book resulting from this problem. But she has tried her very best. In all, patients with CFS, their truly caring and knowledgeable physicians, and other caregivers will find this a useful work in which there are ample pearls of wisdom to help the patient on the road to recovery.

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