

# How Do Orthomolecules Work? A Pragmatic Perspective Based on their Presumed Psychoactive Effects

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**Abstract** *The author presents the perspective that orthomolecular treatments possess psychoactive effects that result in potentially desirable physiological changes (e.g., sedation, psychomotor slowing, activation, and/or altered sense perception). The psychoactive effects of a broad range of commonly-recommended orthomolecular interventions are listed. This perspective can be integrated into a more expansive understanding of how orthomolecular interventions work, without claiming specific biochemical alterations. Lastly, several key advantages are delineated to support the use of orthomolecular interventions for their psychoactive effects.*

## Introduction

Psychiatric medications are promoted as disease-modifying agents that treat mental disorders based on claims that they correct abnormal brain states by having some impact on underlying disease processes (Moncrieff & Cohen, 2009). Depressed patients, for example, are routinely offered psychiatric medication as a means to correct some abnormal brain state (i.e., serotonin deficiency), as a result of the drug's alleged action upon the underlying disease process (i.e., increasing serotonin to restore balance to an "imbalanced" central nervous system). However, the evidence, linking mental disorders to deficiencies or excesses of specific neurochemicals is devastatingly inadequate (Whitaker, 2005). Proof is lacking for some of the major theories of mental illness, such as the monoamine hypothesis of depression (Moncrieff & Cohen, 2006), and the dopamine hypothesis of schizophrenia (Moncrieff, 2009).

Just because a psychiatric medication

moderates a patient's symptoms of psychosis or depression does not necessarily mean that the medication is correcting some underlying biochemical imbalance. On the contrary, psychiatric medications are more accurately understood as agents that induce an altered physical and mental state (Moncrieff & Cohen, 2009). The psychoactive effects are thus derived from the medication-induced alteration of brain activity. Alcohol is a good example that explains this medication-centred model of therapeutic effect. Some socially-anxious people feel less inhibited when they have a few drinks at public events. The alcohol is not correcting some brain imbalance, but rather is having a psychoactive effect by altering the brain in a manner that leads to less social inhibition.

From this perspective, it might be very desirable for patients with depression to feel stimulated after taking antidepressant medication if they then have more energy and motivation to participate in activities

that they had previously neglected (Moncrieff & Cohen, 2006). Similarly, antipsychotic medications as neuroleptic agents suppress central nervous system activity, give rise to neurological symptoms of Parkinsonism, and induce a state of indifference to one's surroundings and environment (Moncrieff, 2013). Through the suppression of central nervous system functioning, some patients with psychosis experience subjective benefits by becoming indifferent to symptoms of psychosis, such as auditory and/or visual hallucinations.

I believe that this medication-centred model can be integrated into a more expansive understanding of how orthomolecular interventions work. While it is customary for orthomolecularly-minded clinicians to ascribe clinical improvements to biochemical alterations, it would also seem reasonable to ascribe clinical improvements to the psychoactive effects resulting from altered mental states. For instance, the sedating effects of niacinamide might be desirable when alleviating agitation that can often accompany states of mental distress. This perspective embraces the concept that orthomolecular interventions possess psychoactive effects (without knowing the specific biochemical effects upon the brain and/or body), but based on clinical evidence that those psychoactive effects include desirable physiological changes (e.g., sedation, psychomotor slowing, activation, and/or altered sense perception).

In the subsequent sections of this paper, I will discuss the psychoactive benefits from commonly-recommended orthomolecular interventions. To illuminate the psychoactive effects of orthomolecular interventions, I will base the forthcoming information on my clinical experience and published studies. In this way, a model of orthomolecular therapeutic action encourages using these naturally-occurring molecules to alleviate mental distress because of their psychoactive effects as opposed to their ability to correct specific biochemical abnormalities. I will conclude by making the recommendation that orthomolecularly-minded clinicians should, as part of informed consent, let patients know that orthomolecular

treatments possess a multitude of psychoactive effects that may be beneficial, without claiming specific biochemical alterations.

### **Psychoactive Effects of Commonly Recommended Orthomolecular Interventions**

To base orthomolecular treatments on their psychoactive effects requires some explanation of the different psychoactive effects induced by these naturally-occurring molecules. From my perspective, the psychoactive effects of orthomolecular interventions can be broadly delineated into the following categories:

1. *Activation* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which increases positive affect or reduces depression, stimulates, energizes, and/or increases motivation);
2. *Altered sense perception* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which reduces symptoms of psychosis and/or that favourably alters how an individual responds internally and to others about prior misperceptions of reality);
3. *Decreased reward-seeking behavior* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which decreases ruminative or obsessive thinking, the desire to use substances of abuse, and/or compulsive behaviour);
4. *Enhanced cognition* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which increases the ability to maintain focus and attention, memory, and/or the speed of cognitive processing);
5. *Psychomotor slowing* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which results in less akathisia, hyperkinetic activity, dyskinesia, dystonia, mania, hypomania, and/or less needless or incessant moving about); and
6. *Sedation* (i.e., any orthomolecule, or combination thereof, which produces a calming effect, and/or lessening of anxiety or "stress").

Below, I've listed the orthomolecules that I routinely use in clinical practice. The references (i.e., the most recent publications are listed first) were chosen based on evidence linking the particular orthomolecule to a well-delineated therapeutic effect that

could associate or “fit” within one or more of the categories described above. The included references were not scrutinized from a “best quality of evidence” perspective, but more from showing that a particular orthomolecule possesses a psychoactive effect, or range of psychoactive effects. It should be noted that the mere possessing of a psychoactive effect does not necessarily mean that the particular orthomolecule will result in a significant clinical effect or benefit for every patient who has the same diagnosis.

### **Purported Psychoactive Effects of Selected Orthomolecules (in alphabetical order)**

#### **5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP)**

Activation: Jangid, Malik, Singh, & Sharma, 2013; Meyers, 2000; Birdsall, 1998  
Sedation: Kahn & Westenberg, 1985  
Suggested daily dose: 50-3,250 mg

#### **5-Methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF)**

Activation: Miller, 2008; Guaraldi, Fava, Mazzi, & la Greca, 1993  
Suggested daily dose: 15-50 mg

#### **Acetyl-L-Carnitine (ALC)**

Activation: Malaguarnera et al, 2008; Zanardi & Smeraldi, 2006; Montgomery, Thal, & Amrein, 2003; Pettegrew et al, 2002; Garzya et al, 1989; Tempesta et al, 1986  
Enhanced cognition: Malaguarnera et al, 2008; Montgomery, et al, 2003; Spagnoli et al, 1991  
Suggested daily dose: 1,500-4,000 mg

#### **Alpha-tocopherol**

Enhanced cognition: Kontush & Schekatolina, 2004  
Psychomotor slowing: Adler et al, 1998; Barak, Swartz, Shamir, Stein, & Weizman, 1998; Junker, Steigleider, & Gattaz, 1992; Lohr et al, 1988  
Suggested daily dose: 400-2,000 IU

#### **Arginine**

Sedation: Smirga et al, 2007; Daniela, Aikaterini, Miro, Yasushi, & Roman, 2005  
Suggested daily dose: 2,640-3,000 mg

#### **Ascorbic Acid**

Activation: Amr, El-Mogy, Shams, Vieira, & Lakhan, 2013  
Altered sense perception: Dakhale, Khanzode, Khanzode, & Saoji, 2005  
Sedation: de Oliveira, de Souza, Motta, & Da-Silva, 2015; Mazloom, Ekramzadeh, & Hejazi, 2013; Stough et al, 2011; Kennedy et al, 2010; Brody, Preut, Schommer, & Schürmeyer, 2002  
Suggested daily dose: 250-3,000 mg

#### **B-Complex Vitamins**

Activation: Lewis et al, 2013  
Altered sense perception: Levine et al, 2006  
Sedation: Stough et al, 2011; Kennedy et al, 2010  
Suggested daily dose: 1 pill with doses of B-complex vitamins ranging from 10-100 mg with lesser (i.e., microgram) amounts of folic acid and cobalamin

#### **Calcium**

Activation: Harrison-Hohner et al, 2001; Thys-Jacobs, 2000; Ward & Holimon, 1999; Arasteh, 1994  
Suggested daily dose: 1,000-2,000 mg (females)

#### **Citicoline**

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Brown, Gorman, & Hynan, 2007  
Enhanced cognition: Cotroneo et al, 2013; García-Cobos, Frank-García, Gutiérrez-Fernández, & Díez-Tejedor, 2010; Brown, Gorman, & Hynan, 2007; Alvarez et al, 1999  
Suggested daily dose: 1,000-1,200 mg

#### **Cobalamin**

Activation: Mitchell, 2007; Yamada, 1995; Newbold, 1989; Ellis & Nasser, 1973  
Enhanced cognition: van Tiggelen, Peperkamp, & Tertoolen, 1984  
Suggested daily dose: 5,000-9,000 mcg intramuscularly (as hydroxocobalamin); 1,000-1,500 mcg orally (as methylcobalamin)

#### **Coenzyme Q10 (COQ10)**

Activation: Forester et al, 2012  
Suggested daily dose: 1,200 mg

**Cholecalciferol**

Activation: Shaffer et al, 2014; Khoraminy, Tehrani-Doost, Jazayeri, Hosseini, & Djazayeri, 2013; Shipowick, Moore, Corbett, & Bandler, 2009; Jorde, Sneve, Figenschau, Svartberg, & Waterloo, 2008

Suggested daily dose: 1,500-5,000 IU or 20,000-40,000 IU weekly

**Choline bitartrate**

Enhanced cognition: Fovall et al, 1980

Psychomotor slowing: Stoll, 1996

Suggested daily dose: 3-8 g (as free choline derived from choline bitartrate)

**Creatine**

Activation: Lyoo et al, 2012; Roitman, Green, Osher, Karni, & Levine, 2007; Amital, Vishne, Rubinow, & Levine, 2006; Amital, Vishne, Roitman, Kotler, & Levine, 2006

Enhanced cognition: Rae, Digney, McEwan, & Bates, 2003

Sedation: Amital, Vishne, Roitman, Kotler, & Levine, 2006

Suggested daily dose: 5,000 mg

**Chromium**

Activation: Docherty, Sack, Roffman, Finch, & Komorowski, 2005; Davidson, Abraham, Connor, & McLeod, 2003; McLeod & Golden, 2000; McLeod & Golden, 1999

Enhanced cognition: Krikorian, Eliassen, Boespflug, Nash, & Shidler, 2010

Suggested daily dose: 400-1,000 mcg

**Dimethylaminoethanol (DMAE)**

Activation: Coleman, Dexheimer, DiMascio, Redman, & Finnerty, 1976; Lewis & Young, 1975

Enhanced cognition: Coleman et al, 1976; Lewis & Young, 1975

Psychomotor slowing: Simpson, Voitashevsky, Young, & Lee, 1977; Coleman et al, 1976; Casey & Denney, 1975; De Silva & Huang, 1975; Fann, Sullivan, Miller, & McKenzie, 1975; Lewis & Young, 1975; Miller, 1974

Suggested daily dose: 300-1,200 mg

**Folic acid**

Activation: Mitchell, 2007; Abou-Saleh &

Coppen, 2006; Coppen & Bailey, 2000 Suggested daily dose: 500-2,000 mcg

**Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA)**

Sedation: Yamatsu et al, 2015; Yoto et al, 2012; Abdou et al, 2006; Braverman, Pfeiffer, Blum, & Smayda, 1997

Suggested daily dose: 100-4,000 mg

**Glutamine**

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Rogers & Pelton, 1957

Suggested daily dose: 2,000 mg

**Glycine**

Activation: Heresco-Levy, Ermilov, Lichtenberg, & Javitt, 2004; Heresco-Levy et al, 1999; Heresco-Levy et al, 1996; Javitt, Zylberman, Zukin, Heresco-Levy, & Lindenmayer et al, 1994

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Cleveland, DeLaPaz, Fawwaz, & Challop, 2010; Greenberg et al, 2009

Suggested daily dose: 30-90 g (not to be combined with clozapine)

**Inositol**

Activation: Mukai, Kishi, Matsuda, & Iwata, 2014; Carlomagno, Unfer, Buffo, & D'Ambrosio, 2011; Nierenberg et al, 2006; Chengappa et al, 2000; Elizur, Kofman, & Belmaker, 1995

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Gelber, Levine, & Belmaker, 2001; Fux, Benjamin, & Belmaker, 1999

Sedation: Palatnik, Frolov, Fux, & Benjamin, 2001; Benjamin et al, 1995

Suggested daily dose: 2-25 g

**Inositol Hexaniacinate**

Enhanced cognition: Loriaux, Deijen, Orlebeke, & De Swart, 1985

Suggested daily dose: 500 mg (providing a minimum of 140 mg of niacin)

**Iron**

Activation: Vaucher, Druais, Waldvogel, & Favrat, 2012 (women with serum ferritin < 50 ug/L and hemoglobin > 12.0 g/dL); McClung et al, 2009 (women); Verdon et al, 2003 (women with low or borderline serum ferritin)

concentrations)

Enhanced cognition: Konofal et al, 2008 (non-anemic children with ferritin < 30 ug/L); Konofal, Cortese, Lecendreux, Arnulf, & Mouren, 2005 (non-anemic boy with low serum ferritin); Sever, Ashkenazi, Tyano, & Weizman, 1997 (non-anemic boys); Bruner, Joffe, Duggan, Casella, & Brandt, 1996 (adolescent girls with serum ferritin < 12 ug/L and normal hemoglobin)

Psychomotor slowing: Konofal et al, 2008 (non-anemic children with ferritin < 30 ug/L); Konofal, Cortese, Lecendreux, Arnulf, & Mouren, 2005 (non-anemic boy with low serum ferritin); Sever, Ashkenazi, Tyano, & Weizman, 1997 (non-anemic boys)

Suggested daily dose: 15-260 mg (elemental iron, females); 5 mg/kg or 80 mg (elemental iron, children)

### Lysine

Activation: Zeinoddini et al, 2014

Altered sense perception: Zeinoddini et al, 2014; Wass et al, 2011

Enhanced cognition: Wass et al, 2011

Sedation: Smirga et al, 2007; Daniela, Aikaterini, Miro, Yasushi, & Roman, 2005

Suggested daily dose: 3,000-6,000 mg

### Magnesium

Activation: Barragán-Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Morán, & Guerrero-Romero, 2008; Eby & Eby, 2006; Cox, Campbell, & Dowson, 1991; Facchinetti et al, 1991

Enhanced cognition: Mousain-Bosc et al, 2006; Starobrat-Hermelin & Kozielc, 1997

Psychomotor slowing: Mousain-Bosc et al, 2006; Starobrat-Hermelin & Kozielc, 1997

Sedation: De Souza, Walker, Robinson, & Bolland, 2000

Suggested daily dose: 200-1,200 mg (adults), or 6 mg/kg or 200 mg (children)

### Manganese

Psychomotor slowing: Kunin, 1976

Suggested daily dose: 15-60 mg

### Melatonin

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Zhdanova & Piotrovskaya, 2000

Sedation: Ferracioli-Oda, Qawasmi, & Bloch, 2013; van Geijlswijk, Korzilius, & Smits, 2010; Brzezinski et al, 2005

Suggested daily dose: 0.1-10 mg

### N-acetylcysteine (NAC)

Activation: Berk et al, 2011; Magalhães et al, 2011; Bulut et al 2009; Berk et al, 2008a; Berk et al, 2008b

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Rodrigues-Barata, Tosti, Rodríguez-Pichardo, & Camacho-Martínez, 2013; Gray et al, 2012; Gray et al, 2010; Grant, Odlaug, & Kim, 2009; Mardikian, LaRowe, Hedden, Kalivas, & Malcolm, 2007; Lafleur, 2006; LaRowe et al, 2006

Psychomotor slowing: Berk et al, 2008b

Suggested daily dose: 1,200-3,600 mg

### Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NADH)

Activation: Birkmayer & Birkmayer, 1991

Enhanced cognition: Demarin, Podobnik, Storga-Tomic, & Kay, 2003; Birkmayer, 1996

Suggested daily dose: 5 mg

### Niacin

Activation: Thompson & Proctor, 1953; Washburne, 1950

Altered sense perception: Hoffer, 1994; Osmond & Hoffer, 1962; Hoffer & Callbeck, 1962; Hoffer, Osmond, Callbeck, & Kahan, 1957; Gregory, 1952; Sydenstricker & Cleckley, 1941

Enhanced cognition: Hoffer, 1974; Hoffer, 1962; Gregory, 1952; Sydenstricker & Cleckley, 1941

Psychomotor slowing: Kunin, 1976

Sedation: Thompson & Proctor, 1953

Suggested daily dose: 75-4,500 mg

### Niacinamide

Activation: Chouinard, Young, Annable, & Sourkes, 1979; Chouinard, Young, Annable, & Sourkes, 1977; MacSweeney, 1975

Altered sense perception: Hoffer, 1994; Hoffer, Osmond, Callbeck, & Kahan, 1957

Enhanced cognition: Brenner, 1982; Hoffer, 1971

Psychomotor slowing: Brenner, 1982; Hoffer, 1971

Sedation: Prousky, 2005; Prousky 2004; Wright, 1992



Suggested daily dose: 1,000–6,000 mg

### **Omega-3 essential fatty acids**

Activation: Mocking et al, 2016; Sarris et al, 2016; Sarris, Mischoulon, & Schweitzer, 2012; Clayton et al, 2009

Enhanced cognition: Bloch & Qawasmi, 2011

Psychomotor slowing: Shakeri et al, 2016; Bloch & Qawasmi, 2011; Clayton et al, 2009

Sedation: Kiecolt-Glaser, Belury, Andridge, Malarkey, & Glaser, 2011; Buydens-Branchey, Branchey, & Hibbeln, 2008

Suggested daily dose: 360–4,400 mg EPA and 348–1,560 mg DHA

### **Phenylalanine**

Activation: Birkmayer, Riederer, Linauer, & Knoll, 1984 (L-form); Beckmann, Strauss, & Ludolph, 1974 (D,L-form); Beckmann, Athen, Olteanu, & Zimmer, 1970 (D,L-form)

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Blum, Trachtenberg, Elliot, Dingler, & Sexton, 1989 (equal amounts of the D- and L-forms); Blum & Trachtenberg, 1988 (equal amounts of the D- and L-forms); Blum, Allison, Trachtenberg, Williams, & Loebllich, 1988 (equal amounts of the D- and L-forms)

Suggested daily dose: 230–1,380 mg (L-form); 230–1,380 mg (D-form); 75–200 mg (D,L-form)

### **Phosphatidylserine**

Activation: Maggioni et al, 1990

Enhanced cognition: Hirayama et al, 2014

Psychomotor slowing: Hirayama et al, 2014; Manor et al, 2012; Delwaide, Gyselynck; Mambourg, Hurllet, & Ylieff, 1986

Suggested daily dose: 150–300 mg

### **Pyridoxine**

Activation: Kashanian, Mazinani, & Jalalmanesh, 2007; Wyatt, Dimmock, & Jones, 2000

Enhanced cognition: Dolina, Margalit, Malitsky, & Rabinkov, 2014; Mousain-Bosc et al, 2006; Brenner, 1982

Psychomotor slowing: Dolina, Margalit, Malitsky, & Rabinkov, 2014; Miodownik et

al, 2006; Mousain-Bosc et al, 2006; Lerner, Kaptan, Miodownik, & Kotler, 1999; Lerner & Liberman, 1998; Brenner, 1982

Sedation: Kashanian, Mazinani, & Jalalmanesh, 2007; Wyatt, Dimmock, & Jones, 2000

Suggested daily dose: 50–1,200 mg (adults); 0.6 mg/kg or up to 100 mg (children); 200 mg (adolescents)

### **S-adenosylmethionine (SAME)**

Activation: Sarris et al, 2016; Kagan, Sultzer, Rosenlicht, & Gerner, 1990; Bunney Jr, & Potkin, 1988

Suggested daily dose: 800–1,600 mg

### **Theanine**

Enhanced cognition: Park et al, 2011

Sedation: Unno et al, 2013; Yoto, Motoki, Murao, & Yokogoshi, 2012; Lyon, Kapoor, & Juneja, 2011; Ristner et al, 2010; Nobre, Rao, & Owen, 2008; Lu et al, 2004; Juneja, Chu, Okubo, Nagato, & Yokogoshi, 1999

Suggested daily dose: 50–400 mg

### **Tyrosine**

Activation: Neri et al, 1995; Mouret et al, 1988; Gelenberg, Wojcik, Gibson, & Wurtman, 1983; Gelenberg, Wojcik, Growdon, Sved, & Wurtman, 1980

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Blum et al, 1988

Enhanced cognition: Mahoney, Castellani, Kramer, Young, & Lieberman, 2007; Deijen, Wientjes, Vullingsh, Cloin, & Langefeld, 1999; Neri et al, 1995; Deijen & Orlebeke, 1994; Shurtleff, Thomas, Schrot, Kowalski, & Harford, 1994; Reimherr, Wender, Wood, & Ward, 1987; Wood, Reimherr, & Wender, 1984

Psychomotor slowing: Reimherr, Wender, Wood, & Ward, 1987; Wood, Reimherr, & Wender, 1984

Sedation: Dollins, Krock, Storm, Wurtman, & Lieberman, 1995; Banderet & Lieberman, 1989

Suggested daily dose: 30–150 mg/kg

### **Tryptophan**

Activation: Ghadirian, Murphy, & Gendron, 1998; McGrath, Buckwald, & Resnick, 1990;

Thomson et al, 1982; Chouinard, Young, Annable, & Sourkes, 1979; Chouinard, Young, Annable, & Sourkes, 1977; MacSweeney, 1975

Decreased reward-seeking behavior: Bowen, Spring, & Fox, 1991

Sedation: Schneider-Helmert & Spinweber, 1986

Suggested daily dose: 1-15 g

## Zinc

Activation: Ranjbar et al, 2013; Lai et al, 2012; Siwek et al, 2009; Nowak, Siwek, Dudek, Zięba, & Pilc, 2003

Enhanced cognition: Akhondzadeh, Mohammadi, & Khademi, 2004; Bilici et al, 2004

Psychomotor slowing: Akhondzadeh, Mohammadi, & Khademi, 2004; Bilici et al, 2004

Suggested daily dose: 15-30 mg

## Discussion

There are several key advantages to clinicians and patients when orthomolecular interventions are recommended for their psychoactive effects. First, I believe this paradigm to be a more encouraging way to recommend orthomolecular interventions. I could never reasonably demonstrate to any patient that his/her clinical improvement was due to (or the result of), for example, a lowered homocysteine level, or raised serotonin level. However, I could reasonably link a patient's clinical improvement to the psychoactive effects of a particular orthomolecular intervention.

Second, the psychoactive effects of orthomolecules are far less likely to result in dangerous shifts in a patient's mental state. It is known that psychiatric medications can be associated with violence (Moore, Glenmullen, & Furberg, 2010), suicide (Björkenstam et al, 2013), and even homicide (Breggin, 2008; Lucire & Crotty, 2011). To my knowledge, there has never been any published report linking an orthomolecule to these extreme shifts in mental states. I do not mean to suggest, however, that orthomolecules are exempt from being associated with rare and worrisome psychoactive effects. There have been case reports, for instance, linking glutamine (Mebane, 1984) and SAME (Kagan,

Sultzer, Rosenlicht, & Gerner, 1990) to triggering mania even among patients with no known history of bipolar disorder. The point is that the risks of severe psychoactive effects are much greater with psychiatric medication compared to the risks associated with the therapeutic use of orthomolecules.

Third, this approach does not have to further stigmatize patients. The contemporary approach to psychiatric treatment can reinforce notions of being "brain-disordered." Patients can sometimes feel as though they have something wrong within their brains, and that psychiatric medications are required to fix these intrinsic biochemical abnormalities. Many patients also become subsumed by their mental disorder diagnoses and over-identify themselves within this disordered framework of self. It is not uncommon to hear a patient say, "I did this because of my ADD." or "I couldn't control my anger because I am borderline." Contrary to what many people believe, the provision of mental disorder diagnoses have been associated with the perpetuation of stigma (e.g., see "failure to reduce stigma" in Deacon, 2013, p. 852), and exacerbated perceptions of being abnormal and distinct from the rest of the population (Lebowitz & Ahn, 2014).

The approach advocated here, unlike the contemporary approach, does not have to reinforce notions of brain-based biochemical imbalances. Such delinking of treatment to brain-based biochemical imbalances should open clinician-patient interactions to greater empathy, kindness, affirmation, respect, and a more authentic appreciation of human suffering. In addition to an appropriate clinical examination that might involve some combination of metabolic testing and differential diagnosing (i.e., to exclude organic disease and other potential causes), a robust inventory of a patient's signs and/or symptoms can help the clinician to identify potentially useful orthomolecular interventions to lessen (or counteract) the patient's manifestations of mental distress.

## Conclusion

Basing orthomolecular interventions on their psychoactive effects should be em-

braced because it is more congruent with how patients' report on their progress, more encouraging because psychoactive effects are more readily demonstrable compared to outcomes associated with unproven brain-based biochemical imbalances, and more humanistic and life-affirming because this approach is generally very safe and should reduce some of the stigma associated with having mental disorder diagnoses.

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### Competing Interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

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