

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY AND ETHNICITY

A symposium was held from April 26-28, 1998 in Trinidad and Tobago that brought together a variety of scientists from Europe and North America to discuss the latest findings regarding psychopharmacology and ethnicity. Many of the meeting's attendees were physicians and scientists from the Caribbean region. Although this meeting was held almost two years ago, many of its findings remain relevant in the evaluation of drug response in different ethnic populations. There were eleven different presentations and discussion groups. These presentations focused on three basic and clinical areas: pharmacogenetics and drug metabolism, the effects of antipsychotics and the effects of antidepressants. There were two presentations that emphasized a genetic basis in the metabolism of psychotropic drugs with two specific cytochrome P-450 (CYP) isozymes, 2D6 and 2C19. Other topics presented were the treatment of refractory bipolar disorders, substance abuse and methodological issues in the studies of ethnicity and psychotropic drugs.

The Caribbean region represents a special problem to scientists and clinicians due to the region's physical nature of many islands and the variety of different populations. Coordination of limited resources and utilization of current assets that could enhance work in the region and improve patient care were discussed by the panel of visiting scientists and clinicians.

Three articles are presented in this issue of Drug Metabolism and Drug Interactions as highlights of the symposium. These three articles describe: 1. ethnic influences and pharmacogenetics in the treatment of psychosis, which reviews antipsychotic medications (both typical and atypical antipsychotics); 2. pharmacogenetics in the treatment of

depression, which reviews antidepressants, and 3. psychopharmacological studies in the Caribbean.

These articles summarize the current findings in antipsychotic and antidepressant pharmacogenetics with an emphasis on ethnicity. An updated database is provided on CYP isozymes in drug disposition and ethnicity. Finally, work on psychotropic drugs completed in the Caribbean is reviewed. We hope that the reader finds these articles of interest and appreciates the many issues facing Caribbean clinicians.

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