

Preface

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One of the classical problems associated with theories about the mind has been the fact that, although changes occur in the mind as a result of experience or (sadly) mental illness, the brain itself seems to remain physically unaltered. How, then, is it possible that the brain—which, superficially, gives the appearance of being an “inert” physical entity—can be responsible for the dramatic changes that can occur in the mind? In recent years, we have learned that the brain is subject to genetic and hormonal influences and is affected by subtle anatomic abnormalities, as well as many biochemical factors, including some medications, cytokines, and various kinds of toxins. Therefore, the fundamental question of relating such influences on the brain to the pathogenesis of mental disorders must be addressed. It is in this context that the contributors to the present publication attempt to explore and understand the etiology of depressive illness.

As president of the Collège International de Recherche Servier (CIRS), it is my pleasure to acknowledge and thank all of the authors for their valuable contributions to these published proceedings—the third *Annals* of CIRS—and

especially our chairman, Theodore B. Van Itallie, and vice chairman, Madhu Kalia, who did extensive work in compiling and editing the articles for the *Annals*.

CIRS has an exciting challenge in creating a “Façon de Faire” of itself and working with leaders of opinion in different countries and medical fields to develop updated analytical reviews of clinical and research developments in areas of medical importance, such as the preceding themes of our *Annals*—first “Stress,” then “Aging,” and now, “Depression.” These contributions are especially valuable because they are based on the experience and expertise of each of the members of CIRS’s Scientific Advisory Committee.

The reviews that follow are intended to provide the reader with information about current trends and should be considered in the context of what is already known about depression. What is striking about these articles is their consensus about the growing evidence for a biological basis of depressive illness and the fact that the empirical approach to this scourge is rapidly giving way to a rational science-based approach.