of the early intervention practitioners. They describe straightforward psychosocial and pharmacological therapies that should be used by all multidisciplinary teams. The only distinguishing feature is the sub-specialists’ touching faith in the effectiveness of antipsychotic medicines, which presumably arises from lack of prolonged experience with individual patients.

This inadequate experience of chronic illness is certain to lead to tragedies in the UK. The chosen remit of early intervention practitioners is to assist patients during the first 3 years of illness (Birchwood et al., 1998) – unless case-loads are high, when the ‘critical period’ can be reduced to 18 months (McGorry et al., 1999). When relapses occur, ordinary in-patient and community teams will, of course, have to pick up the pieces and I am in no doubt that they will be criticised for not being as attentive and caring as previous workers.

Community mental health teams do not ‘inevitably focus on the needs of “prevalent” rather than “incident” cases’. Those who are definitely – or probably, or possibly – in the early stages of psychosis are high in their list of priorities. Unlike Manchanda et al., they do not require ‘controlled trials to assess the efficacy of early intervention’. These patients are unwell and they all require prompt and appropriate treatment. One of the most important tasks of consultant psychiatrists is to prioritise according to clinical need and it is frustrating when diversion of resources to highly protected teams makes difficult decisions even more painful. Your correspondents are shirking their responsibilities in depending on central planning to protect their case-loads (Milner, 2003; Owen, 2003). Valuable work has been done in this area (Kennedy & Griffiths, 2001) and training would be available for any sub-specialist who returns to mainstream practice.

The introduction of early intervention teams in the UK should now be halted. This is suggested in the past that depression and schizophrenia DHEA is low. Two other hormones may adversely affect the function or availability of DHEA: cortisol and testosterone. Over the past few years a connection with low DHEA, along with increased cortisol, has been demonstrated regarding depression. It is known that schizophrenia is often characterised as resulting from a non-causal, but significant, stressful event (cortisol) usually beginning in the late teens or early twenties (testosterone of puberty, in men and women, along with the natural decline of DHEA which begins at around age 20).

In individuals of low DHEA, increased cortisol and testosterone may expose underlying, silent pathology. Therefore, I suggest that increased rates of psychoses and depression in urban areas may be the product of increased stress and testosterone in both men and women. As suggested above, the secular trend may be due to increasing numbers of individuals of higher testosterone. This increase in these individuals of higher testosterone, along with increasing stress of urbanisation, may account for the findings of Sundquist et al., as well as reports of recent increases in these mental disorders.


**Neurosurgery for mental disorder**

Dr Persaud provides an ardent but ultimately flawed argument in favour of allowing neurosurgery for mental disorder (NMD) to die out (Persaud/Crossley & Freeman, 2003).

Patients who are considered for NMD are among the most severely ill and disabled who come into contact with any branch of the medical profession, and such presentations merit conceptualisation as rather more than having ‘psychological problems’.

It is also disingenuous to argue that ‘psychosurgery’ (sic) tries to locate complex psychiatric disorders in ‘one so-called “abnormal” brain region’. Such hangovers

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**Testosterone and psychosis**

Increased testosterone may be the cause of the finding of Sundquist et al. (2004) that ‘A high level of urbanisation is associated with increased risk of psychosis and depression for both women and men’. Two hypotheses are required to explain this.

It is my hypothesis (Howard, 2001a) that human evolution is driven by testosterone. Based on this, I suggest the ‘secular trend’, the increase in size and early puberty of children, is actually an increase in the percentage of individuals of higher testosterone. The trend may actually be a change in percentage of individuals within our populations and their ‘characteristics’ may also be increasing. This phenomenon occurs when a ‘feed and breed’ environment occurs. In these situations, individuals of higher testosterone, both men and women, will increase more rapidly than those of lower testosterone over time. (Individuals of higher testosterone are more aggressive and sexual.) Urban areas are ‘feed and breed’ centres; I suggest urban centres are areas of higher testosterone.

I hypothesise that dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is directly involved in growth and development, and subsequent maintenance, of all tissues, especially the brain. (The large brain of mammals may have resulted from an evolutionary increase in DHEA; Howard, 2001b.) Numerous reports of beneficial effects of DHEA on neurons and tissue-level structures of the brain exist in the literature. I have suggested in the past that depression and schizophrenia, among other mental disorders, result from low DHEA during growth and development, subsequently exposed by adverse circumstances during maintenance.