

Letters to the Editor

Who 'Speaks' to the Schizophrenic?

Sir,

The hallucination of spoken voice is a complex phenomenon. But we mention more about what is spoken in what person than about who speaks. The speaker cannot be neglected just because he has not been 'ranked' for the purpose of diagnosis.

Each schizophrenic has his own style of hallucinating. There is a method - reasonable or otherwise - of the choice of speaker. The speaker may be the persecutor, God or the Devil. He may be the person in whom the patient is interested or the one disliked by the patient (Rosenthal and Quinn 1977). The known living speaker is associated with high psychoticism scores (Ramanathan 1984a). The unknown speaker may represent the society (Linn 1977). There may not be a biological factor underlying the choice of speaker. The Genain Quadruplets hallucinated the voices of different speakers (Rosenthal and Quinn 1977). There is no speaker-specific neuroleptic. The speaker is not significantly affected by neuroleptic treatment and neuroleptic withdrawal (Hoehn-Saric and Gross 1968).

The speaker's profile is not the matter for mere academic curiosity. Myra, one of the Genain Quadruplets was supposed to have heard the voices of her parents in the first hallucination and she eventually fared best. Involvement of specific individuals known to the patient in the first hallucination probably carries better prognosis (Rosenthal and Quinn 1977). Interference with activities of the schizophrenic by hallucination is low if the speaker is a known living person (Ramanathan 1984b). Much probing is necessary to bear out the practical relevance of the speaker.

References

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