

Niacin, The Real Story

So What IS the Story with this Book? And Why Update it Now?

Review by Robert Sealey

Niacin, The Real Story, second edition, 2023, is a remarkable book. The authors of the first edition, Abram Hoffer, PhD, MD, Andrew Saul, PhD and Harold Foster, PhD, wrote detailed information about niacin (a form of vitamin B3): research, clinical uses and patient recoveries. This second edition, *twice as long*, comes with more of the real story (updated by Andrew Saul and other professionals).

Who was Abram Hoffer and What did he do as a physician and a researcher?

Abram Hoffer had two degrees when he started to practice medicine in 1950 in Saskatchewan, Canada. He had an MD and a PhD in biochemistry. As a psychiatrist and a researcher, he wore ‘two hats’. His team provided care to more than 2000 patients at the Weyburn Asylum. Many of those patients were psychotic. In those years, there were issues with the quality of care. What to do?

Dr. Hoffer accepted that challenge. Hoffer and his team researched and developed safe, effective and restorative treatments. Niacin became a key aspect of patient recoveries; if given in optimal doses. Many patients stabilized and recovered.

During his 60-year career, Abram Hoffer also became a writer. He wrote more than 30 books, 600 articles and started a medical journal to report research, discoveries and developments in clinical chemistry, particularly those he applied to psychiatry.

How did Dr. Abram Hoffer, PhD and his team approach psychotic patients?

During the 1950s, Dr. Hoffer and his team studied psychosis. They considered various possible causes and they developed an innovative treatment program. They noticed that some patients with schizophrenia had deficient diets; others had disorders of metabolism. According to the medical literature at that time and prior research, several underlying conditions could cause a person to hallucinate.

Abram Hoffer took patient histories and noted each patient’s medical diagnoses. He also considered their diets and thought about their metabolisms.

When appropriate, he prescribed essential nutrients (including vitamins such as niacin) to help patients restore and maintain their health.

Why did Abram Hoffer and his team consider patients’ diets and disorders of metabolism *before* they customized treatment programs for each patient?

Dr. Hoffer considered the biochemistry of each patient's underlying medical, metabolic, hormonal, nutrition and other conditions. He claimed that his 'restorative' approach could help patients recover. He learned this by reading about two precedents – scurvy and pellagra. His work extended earlier research.

Abram Hoffer's claim of a 75% recovery rate strained the credibility of other psychiatrists whose approaches to psychosis (labels, pills, talks and shocks), left many patients unwell: sedated but not able to live normally.

Why treat with niacin? Can vitamins and other 'nutrients' restore health?

As a PhD biochemist, Hoffer knew things about vitamins that most doctors do not study or know. For example, he learned that vitamin B3 has unique properties, (niacin is one form). Those unique properties are relevant to human metabolism and useful for restoring health if patients have certain underlying conditions.

Optimal doses of niacin and other nutrients (vitamins, trace minerals and amino acids) can restore health and maintain stable metabolism. When? If patients are malnourished, have certain underlying conditions or disorders of metabolism.

Any downside to this approach? Niacin can cause a brief but harmless 'flush' when a patient first takes it. That warmth and reddish-skin soon resolves. Anything else? Recovered patients feel better while taking niacin, and, they tend to live longer.

What sorts of patients did Abram Hoffer treat?

Many of Abram Hoffer's patients had schizophrenia as well as depression and anxiety. Over the years, he also treated patients who had ADHD or autism; other patients had arthritis, alcoholism, cancer, diabetes or pellagra; some patients had high cholesterol. Dr. Hoffer adapted his 'restorative' approach to help them all.

What was different about Dr. Hoffer's 'restorative' approach to patient care?

Dr. Hoffer considered each patient's history, diagnoses and diet. Alcohol use? He 'connected the dots' to nutritional deficiencies and disorders of metabolism.

He continued conventional treatments for medical conditions and he customized regimens of vitamins, minerals and amino acids. Why those add-on regimens? *To resolve patients' nutritional deficiencies and treat specific metabolic issues.*

Hoffer claimed that his approach was safe and effective. Many of his patients stabilized and recovered so they could live comfortably without mental symptoms, episodes or outbursts. They appreciated restorative care because it gave them better outcomes and fewer side effects compared to pills, talks or ECT shocks.

What happened to Hoffer's 'restorative' approach?

As often happens with medical discoveries, few doctors knew the real story or took the time to read about it. Why not? Busy psychiatrists do not consider nutrition or metabolism. Some have so many patients that they cut corners to save time.

Do psychiatrists forget that the human brain and body need essential nutrients?

Why refuse to consider whether optimal nutrition, vitamins, trace minerals and amino acids can complement other treatments and help some patients recover?

Rather than learn, naysayers scoffed at Hoffer's research, ignored his discoveries and disputed the value of niacin. Apparently they preferred pills, talks and shocks.

Also, few psychiatrists had ever seen psychotic patients recover so they were skeptical about Dr. Hoffer's claim that 75% of psychotic patients could recover enough to live well. *To skeptical psychiatrists, Hoffer's claim seemed impossible.*

Medical advances – research, discoveries and progress can get stuck – for years

The public – patients, families and caregivers – might expect busy psychiatrists to welcome any approach which could help psychotic patients recover and live well. It seems counterintuitive that any medical professional would dismiss Dr. Hoffer's research and his discovery of an important advance in the practice of psychiatry.

Why ignore Hoffer's double-blind placebo-controlled studies, the first ever done in psychiatry, in the 1950s? Why dismiss a 75% recovery rate? Reality-check? Rejection of medical discoveries has happened before, time after time. Early research and discoveries are routinely dismissed and disparaged, then ignored by 'experts' – For how long? Until other researchers repeat the pioneering research and *re-discover things that have already been discovered.*

Ongoing education can help the public, and the medical profession, understand the need to assess diet and metabolism, then plan and monitor safe, effective and restorative treatment regimens. *Niacin, The Real Story, Second Edition* adds a considerable amount of important information to the public record.

Is one re-discovery enough? Sadly, no. Several re-discoveries are typically necessary before repeated success stories alert medical professionals to advances in medicine. Then they have to repeat the research and re-confirm the re-discoveries before they can satisfy themselves that any new ideas, methods and approaches are safe and effective. This discovering and re-discovering process takes decades.

Examples? Scurvy and pellagra. Over decades, hundreds of thousands of trusting patients sickened, deteriorated and died while 'experts' argued about how to test, diagnose and treat those patients safely and effectively.

What lessons did early researchers learn about how to treat scurvy and pellagra? Scurvy research started in the 1700s. One hundred years ago, researchers learned that pellagra patients'

symptoms pointed to *underlying nutritional deficiencies* – which could be treated safely, effectively and restoratively.

How? Two approaches to safe and effective care for patients with scurvy or pellagra were researched, developed and found safe and effective. 1. Adjusting patients' diets to provide optimal levels of essential nutrients and 2. Giving patients optimal doses of vitamin C (for scurvy) and vitamin B3 (niacin - for pellagra).

Do forms of scurvy and pellagra continue to this day? Yes – starvation, kidney dialysis and alcohol addiction can all cause deficiencies of essential nutrients.

Decade after decade, Abram Hoffer and his team helped patients recover.

Niacin, The Real Story, Second edition, reports that over decades, a succession of researchers repeated Dr. Hoffer's studies and confirmed his discoveries.

Even so, conventional psychiatrists continue to dismiss or ignore Dr. Abram Hoffer's research, discoveries and clinical progress reports. They still doubt his claim of a 75% recovery rate for psychosis? *And, they ignore re-discoveries.*

Should you read this book or believe naysayers?

My view? Read this book; learn the real story about niacin, its health-restoring capabilities, research and discoveries made by scientists and medical professionals – over decades. You may not understand biochemistry but you do not need a PhD to read this book. *Niacin, The Real Story* will introduce you to Dr. Abram Hoffer and his innovative approach to providing safe and effective medical care.

Note - If you are a patient or a caregiver, a researcher or a health professional, expect to learn surprising things about niacin and Abram Hoffer's research and discoveries. This second edition reports that over the last 100 years, other doctors have also given niacin to patients with psychosis and nutritional deficiencies. Their patients recovered too. Also, several scientific and medical researchers have tested Abram Hoffer's methods and validated his discoveries.

Patient self-help - Abram Hoffer's approach, research, discoveries and recoveries remain little-known *while many patients suffer*. Where does that leave patients?

Abram Hoffer wrote patient-friendly books so patients, families and caregivers can read about 'restorative' care. Then what? Who can patients consult if they might have disorders of metabolism *which their doctors do not consider*? Patients can ask for second opinions, consult specialists or search for physicians who practice functional or integrative medicine. Enquire: 'Do you offer restorative care?' Notice each doctor's response. Ask whether safe and effective care could save your life!

(*Robert Sealey is the author of Finding Care for Depression and Remembering Abram Hoffer, PhD, MD by Reviewing his Books, and also Abram Hoffer's 60 Years of Research and Discovery of the Orthomolecular Approach to Psychiatry*

<http://www.orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v15n03.shtml> .)