prognosis. Therefore, the finding is compatible with those presented by Watson and Opler. If the finding is related to a hereditary basis of the disease, it does not contradict the gene-virus theory although the statement by Tim Crow is not supported.

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	Month	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Total
Without family history	Female	10	9	7	5	3	2	5	7	4	8	8	6	74
	Male	3	4	5	3	2	2	5	6	6	6	3	3	48
	Total	13	13	12	8	5	4	10	13	10	14	11	9	122
With family history	Female	3	2	7	5	5	5	2	3	2	2	0	0	36
	Male	5	3	2	4	0	5	4	2	1	1	3	0	30
	Total	8	5	9	9	5	10	6	5	3	3	3	0	66

Alprazolam in Depression

DEAR SIR,

May I suggest that Dr. Imlah's valuable finding (that alprazolam is more effective than amitriptyline) must be interpreted with caution? (*Journal*, May 1985, **146**, 515–519).

He observed patients on both drugs over four weeks while still taking the drug. The alprazolam group were therefore showing the effects of both the antidepressant and tranquilising effects of this drug. Benzodiazepines reduce the severity of various depressive symptoms, and are used for this purpose in general practice (e.g. Barraclough, *Journal*, October 1974, **125**, 355–373). The lower scores of the alprazolam group may partly have resulted from this, and might perhaps have been less impressive after drug withdrawal.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Yorkshire. North Riding. The open-door system is in use here in a modified form on the female side. Only external doors are locked, and it is possible to go through all the wards of the division without using a key. The Commissioners say: "We highly commend the system as here in use, and hope it may be extended to the male division. No inconvenience has arisen from it, and it is not found that patients desire to stray from their own ward." They also express approval of the bed-making and other domestic work in the male wards being done by female patients under the guidance of special nurses. Relative to exercise they report: "We are glad to observe that as many as 308 patients of the two sexes have weekly walks beyond the asylum grounds; those, however, who are daily taken for exercise outside the airing courts are but 76, and we think the system of daily extended exercise should be further developed."

Researched by Henry Rollin,
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https://doi.org/10.1192/S0007125000207083 Published online by Cambridge University Press