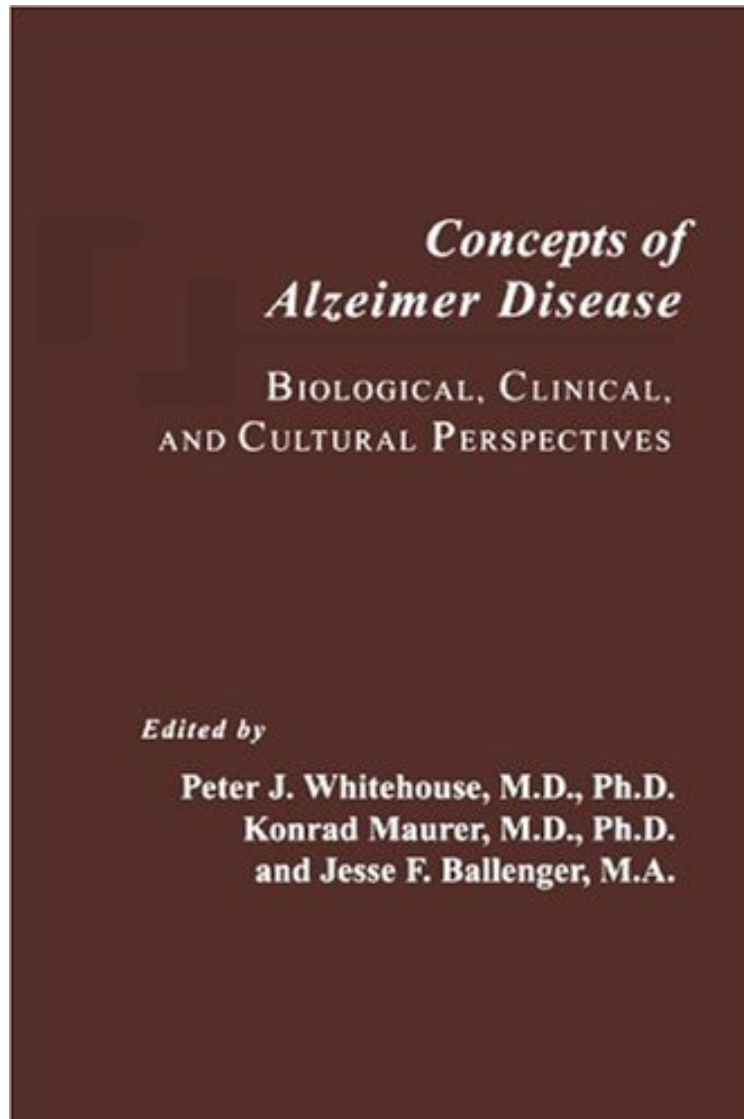


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Concepts of Alzheimer Disease: Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives

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From Brand: Johns Hopkins University Press : Concepts of Alzheimer Disease: Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Concepts of Alzheimer Disease: Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Exceptional book; history and modern state of Alzhiemer'sBy Bruce_in_LA This is an extraordinary book. The title should be taken literally: "Concepts" of Alzheimer's disease, and

from a broad range of fields, including historical, genetic, scientific, sociologic, and philosophic viewpoints on the illness. The book is particularly timely, covering new discoveries about the origins of AD (very recently, scientists have reviewed Alzheimer's now-rediscovered microscope slides and even performed DNA tests on them), the history of genetics and psychiatry relative to AD, and the current politico-economic climate, such as the "current history" (1975-2000) of the growing Alzheimer Association and the National Institute of Aging at NIH. The book is in collected-essay format and the authors are world experts in their fields. It is likely that, while most interested readers will have a background in one niche (such as psychology of AD), they will also be exposed to broad perspectives on AD which are intriguing and new (such as the difference between AD and normal "aging" or "senescence", or the "philosophy" of lab research developed by Fleck and Latour, or the way different kinds of focused and broad interest groups now shape Congressional policy). Alzheimer's is intrinsically complex, so the book is not a light read, but I found it generally quite well written throughout. A sophisticated general reader can enjoy the book, because it is well written, but the main audience is probably those with some biomedical affiliation (from public health to medical sociologists to Alzheimer researchers). Many of the authors are European and most of the perspective is international; however, several of the chapters focus on US policy and US medical history.

As the essays in this volume show, conceptualizing dementia has always been a complex process. With contributions from noted professionals in psychiatry, neurology, molecular biology, sociology, history, ethics, and health policy, *Concepts of Alzheimer Disease* looks at the ways in which Alzheimer disease has been defined in various historical and cultural contexts. The book covers every major development in the field, from the first case described by Alois Alzheimer in 1907 through groundbreaking work on the genetics of the disease. Essays examine not only the prominent role that biomedical and clinical researchers have played in defining Alzheimer disease, but also the ways in which the perspectives of patients, their caregivers, and the broader public have shaped concepts.

From *The New England Journal of Medicine* The first sentence of this excellent book sums up both its content and the reason one should read it: "It is ironic that the professional and popular discourse surrounding Alzheimer disease (AD), whose most dreadful feature is the obliteration of memory, proceed with little awareness of its past." And if Santayana's often-quoted statement about those who cannot remember the past is true, what does this mean for studies of dementia? This book attempts to answer the question and does so very successfully. The origin of this collection of essays was a 1997 symposium held to celebrate the life, legacy, and work of Alois Alzheimer, who described the disease in 1907. One of the first chapters of the book tells the fascinating story of how the case notes for Alzheimer's article were recently discovered in the archives of his department in Frankfurt. Originally, Alzheimer considered the condition to be a presenile phenomenon and thus a disease, a point that is relevant to many of the discussions in this book. By contrast, he interpreted the same symptoms in the elderly ("senile dementia") as merely signs of normal aging. We learn that only in the late 1970s was the disease renamed "senile dementia of the Alzheimer's type" in order to unify these two concepts. How we got from Alzheimer's original concept to the current view that memory loss with aging is not normal is the subject of many of the essays in this book. The book contains a short biography of Alzheimer and describes his early work and that of his colleagues and competitors, a veritable neurologic hall of fame, including Binswanger, Pick, Jakob, Creutzfeldt, Wernicke, and Lewy, to name just a few. We learn that Alzheimer's mentor and promoter, Emil Kraepelin, authorized the eponym "Alzheimer's disease" on the basis only of Alzheimer's 1907 report and a few case reports by another worker. Kraepelin may have acted quickly to credit Alzheimer because he truly believed that Alzheimer had discovered a "new" disease, but the book offers a more interesting explanation. Apparently, there was some rivalry between Kraepelin's laboratory and that of Pick, his competitor. Also, Kraepelin wanted to refute the theories of Freud and the psychoanalysts by proving that mental disease has an organic, not psychodynamic, basis. The discovery of a new neurologic-psychiatric entity by a member of Kraepelin's own circle would serve to enhance his status. In a book focused on the history of Alzheimer's disease, we can see the evolution of our concepts of this disease. It was described clinically at first and then pathologically. In the 1970s and 1980s, the disorder was viewed as a neurochemical entity (the cholinergic hypothesis). Today, we consider Alzheimer's disease a genetic disorder (related to chromosomes and apolipoprotein E). How will we view it in the future? A.M. Clarfield, M.D. Copyright 2000 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. *The New England Journal of Medicine* is a registered trademark of the MMS. "The first sentence of this excellent book sums up both its content and the reason one should read it: 'it is ironic that the professional and popular discourse surrounding Alzheimer disease (AD), whose most dreadful feature is the obliteration of memory, proceeds with little awareness of its past.' And if Santayana's often-quoted statement about those who cannot remember the past is true, what does this mean for studies of dementia? This book attempts to answer the question and does so very successfully." (A. M. Clarfield, M.D. *New England Journal of Medicine*) "This book will be an inspiration of greatest interest to anyone engaged in biological or social research in AD." (*Clinical Gerontologist*) "This is an excellent book, both for the newcomer to the study of Alzheimer disease and to the seasoned reader and clinician." (A. MacDonald *Aging and Mental Health*) "This overview of the history and evolution of the concept of Alzheimer disease is a substantial contribution that will interest readers

in gerontology, geriatrics, neurology, psychiatry, psychology, social science, and public policy. It is a good introductory book for people new to the field, as well as for clinicians and even for family members of those affected by Alzheimer disease." (Constantine G. Lyketsos, M.D., The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine) About the Author Peter J. Whitehouse, M.D., Ph.D., is a professor of neurology, psychiatry, neuroscience, psychology, nursing, organizational behavior, and biomedical ethics at the Fairhill Center for Aging, Case Western Reserve University, and a founding director of the Alzheimer Center at the University Hospitals of Cleveland. Konrad Maurer, M.D., Ph.D., is a professor in and head of the Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, and director of the Clinic for Psychiatry, at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University. Jesse F. Ballenger, Ph.D., is a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute of the History of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University.