

Guest Editorial: Rethinking the Obsessive Compulsive Spectrum

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Over the last ten years, there has been much debate about a category of disorders grouped under the rubric “obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders.” Various disorders have been included in this category, based on phenomenology, family history, comorbidity, neurobiology, and response to treatment interventions. Although which disorders to include has been a source of some debate, the spectrum concept has been valuable for purposes of clinical research and patient care. Clinicians faced with one of these disorders are now able to develop valuable insight into treatment options from research concerning other spectrum disorders. Because of the shared aspects of these disorders, clinicians now have available an array of treatment options that can appreciably improve the lives of patients who suffer from these spectrum disorders.

Although the public and professionals alike are generally aware of obsessive compulsive disorder, disorders related to obsessive compulsive disorder often go underrecognized and untreated. In recent years, however, there has been a rapid increase in the understanding of the phenomenology, epidemiology, neurobiology, psychology, and treatment of obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders. Unfortunately, although many

clinicians encounter patients with these disorders, clinicians often do not diagnose them and frequently are unaware of the possible treatment options. Many clinicians are also unaware of the personal and social consequences of these disorders. This in turn often leads physicians to ignore these disorders in both psychiatric and primary care settings.

In this issue, the clinical characteristics, associated psychopathology, and pharmacological management of selected obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders are reviewed: obsessive compulsive personality disorder, body dysmorphic disorder, hypochondriasis, impulse control disorders, and grooming disorders. Although many other disorders could have been selected for this issue, the ones reviewed attest to the extraordinary progress that has been made regarding obsessive compulsive spectrum disorders. Prevention and treatment interventions, including cognitive, behavioral, and pharmacological, have made it possible for patients with these disorders to often find relief and improve their quality of life. These articles will address these underrecognized and clinically important disorders, with a focus on recent research findings of relevance to clinical practice.

