



Thomas C. Meyer, MD

Current views on mental health management

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We are grateful indeed for the interest and dedication of the Mental Health Association of Milwaukee County and the authors they recruited to allow the publication of the timely and helpful review of mental health topics presented here. This issue of the *Journal* is designed to provide current thinking and managements of common and frequently difficult problems in mental health that may become the province of the primary care physician, mainly because of the scarcity of psychiatric consultation and guidance. Subspecialists, too, may benefit from much of the wisdom contained in these pages e.g. Dr Heinrich's thoughtful review of unexplained symptoms and the concept of somatization (p 83).

While the peer-reviewed section of the *Journal* contains much of the designed content of the issue, the first section contains several equally important contributions that were submitted by authors who were not interested in the peer review or were too late for review. Doctor Witkovsky's review of psychiatric problems of youth (p 14) introduces the topic of screening tools for problems as early as the first year of life. He reviews current thoughts on AODA, suicide, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, autism and schizophrenia in childhood and adolescence. Doctor Chou follows with a review of the controversial topic of antidepressant medication in pediatrics (p 20). Doctor Howell's review of the management of medical and psychiatric co-mor-

bidities (p 23) complements Dr Bresnahan's discussion of psychiatric co-morbidities in epilepsy and end stage renal disease (p 64) and contains rather intimidating but useful tables of the medical conditions which can be associated with common psychiatric entities, drug interactions, and drugs capable of causing psychiatric symptoms. Doctor Diamond's and Dr Chou's lucid articles on how to interact with patients with mental illness are, on the other hand, reassuring for those of us who are intimidated by contact with patients with these conditions (p 29, p 35).

We invited editorials from Dr Adkins, Dr Treffert and Dr Cline relating to peer-reviewed articles. Doctor Adkins' commentary (p 40) endorses Mr Kinderman and colleagues' findings that the pre-authorization requirements for mental health services of Medicaid enrollees do not constitute a significant barrier (p 52) to care. Doctor Treffert (p 41) provides wise council relating to the two articles on post-traumatic stress disorder with different initiating factors (Weiss and Grunert [p 69] and Clardie [p 73]). The views of a busy emergency room physician relating to the early recognition of and intervention for PTSD in the emergency room is well expressed by Dr Joseph Cline (p 43).

In the peer-reviewed section, Doctors Halverson and Chan's article on screening tools for psychiatric disorders in adults (p 46) complements Dr Witkovsky's relating to youth, lists available tools, and

adds a very helpful "where to find" appendix. Dr Clark's thoughtful review of postpartum depression (p 56) outlines the prevalence (8%-15%!), symptoms, screening, and management of the problem, together with caveats during lactation. Ms Lee and her colleagues study the issue of early mental health referral following trauma and conclude that there are significant barriers that limit early mental health referral for severely injured patients and higher incidence of PTSD (p 78). (We apologize for the editorial oversight in failing to request that Dr Treffert address this article in his editorial.)

Doctor Heinrich's discourse on somatization (p 83) is a model of clarity dealing with difficult concepts and is worth the reading time, if only to reinforce the definitions of "illnesses" and "diseases," but there is much more in the article. Of almost equal clarity is Drs Gillmore and Chan's review of suicide (p 88), which discusses forms of completed suicide, recent warning signs, and the risk factors for suicide. Finally, Dr Hansen provides a very useful review of antidepressants and the Texas algorithm as guidance for action should the initial treatment fail (p 93).

Perhaps the major message of this issue is that one should consider collecting a series of screening tools that can be administered selectively to any children, adults, or elderly whose behaviors seem unusual or leave one uncomfortable or puzzled. With the myriad articles present, surely there is something here for everyone.