



From the editor

## The truth about anxiety disorders

**T**oo often, anxiety disorders go unrecognized or undertreated. Worse, many physicians still view an anxiety disorder as a character flaw, mirroring how society sees anxiety. The assumption is, “We all have to deal with frightening stuff. Some can take it, some can’t.”

Yet anxiety disorders are as distinct from everyday anxiety as major depressive disorder is from everyday unhappiness. Further, it is becoming increasingly clear that the consequences of anxiety disorders are serious—and that appropriate treatment can help.

Dr. Bruce Lydiard’s article (page 12) provides an excellent framework for diagnosis and treatment of panic disorder. Dr. John March’s article on obsessive-compulsive disorder in children and adolescents (page 24) does the same for another anxiety-related condition.

We as a profession have increased the public’s awareness of major depression; now we need to increase the public’s understanding of anxiety disorders. We need to impress upon the public and upon primary care physicians that anxiety disorders, like depressive disorders, are serious yet treatable illnesses, not character flaws. By getting this message out, we will decrease the stigma of mental illness and remove barriers to the long-awaited effective treatments that are now becoming available.

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