

# SECOND OPINION

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## Are We All Sick Now?

The new edition of the psychiatrist's bible is about to be published, and it casts a wide net indeed when it comes to defining who is sick and who is not.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Edition Five, or DSM-5 for short, is the manual published by the American Psychiatric Association that forms the basis worldwide for diagnosis, research and medical education.

It sets forth some new and rather ambiguous diagnoses for physicians to affix to their patients, such as "mixed anxiety depression", "psychosis risk syndrome" and "temper dysregulation disorder".

According to a recent issue of the Journal of Mental Health, there's been insufficient research done to warrant inclusion of the new categories.

"There are very big potential implications on how people, particularly adolescents, respond to being told they have a mental illness. It's likely there will be harmful consequences," says Dr. Felicity Callard, a senior researcher at London, England's King's College Institute of Psychiatry.

She cites the "at risk psychosis syndrome" diagnosis as particularly

troublesome, saying "It is a diagnosis of something which could result in a disorder, but only potentially...Imagine a young person being told that they are 'at risk' of developing a mental illness. How would that affect that individual's behaviour? Could it lead to increased stigma or even discrimination? And how might it affect the parents and family of that person too?"

Yet another researcher, Jerome Wakefield of New York University's Department of Psychiatry writes: "One of the most frightening scenarios is the potential for medicating people-particularly children-who haven't yet shown any signs of illness in a bid to 'treat' them."

The Journal's editor also states that "most of these changes (to the manual) imply a more inclusive system of diagnoses, where the proof of normality shrinks to a mere puddle. If normal behaviour is increasingly being categorized as mental illness, then that creates a burden on individuals, families and on society as a whole."

Possibly shedding some light on the rationale for the new set of diagnoses, he says that there are financial implications, as well as the emotional and social toll: "It follows that money has to be set aside to care for the mentally ill and clinicians and careers have to be trained to deal with their 'illness'."

# Mad Pride Day

**-Brian Eaton**

As with every year since 1981, this past July was the occasion for a number of gatherings and events celebrating Mad Pride Day.

It's a time when psychiatric survivors all around the world gather together to demonstrate that, far from being saddled with stigma, people who have experienced madness, and who have joined the ranks of Winston Churchill, Vincent Van Gogh and other famous historical figures, should exult in their condition.

The first Mad Pride Day was initiated by psychiatric survivor Myra Kovary, when she was organizing a demonstration in upstate New York. She tells the story of its origins:

"...At the beginning of the French Revolution when the French citizens stormed the Bastille, they freed the prisoners. Some psychiatric inmates were also freed. I was also reminded of the scene in the film *The King of Hearts* when a British soldier opened the gates of a mental hospital and freed the inmates.

I suggested that we hold our demonstration on Bastille Day. The first Bastille Day demonstration was organized by the Mental Patients Alliance of Central New York (in Ithaca) on July 14, 1981. We held our first demonstration against forced psychiatric treatment on the grounds of Willard Psychiatric Center—a notorious psychiatric center in Ovid, New York."

This year Toronto has been the site for some particularly imaginative Mad Pride Day events, with a whole week devoted to Mad Pride events.

One of the most poignant is *The Patient Built Wall*. It's a walking tour around the grounds of the city's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, formerly known as the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, and before that simply as "999" to local residents.

Originally, it was called the Toronto Insane Asylum. According to Dr. Geoffrey Reaume, a psychiatric survivor who conducted the tour, "Construction of the wall began in 1875 and was finished in 1910, solely with patient labour. This work was referred to as 'therapeutic', and was made mandatory for all male patients, of able body and in 'improved mind'. No one was ever given financial reward or any tangible benefits for this work. It was in fact Slave Labour.

Psychiatric patients endured abuse and could lead monotonous lives inside the asylum's walls, yet these same women and men worked hard at unpaid institutional jobs for years and decades on end, created their own entertainment, even in some cases made their own clothes, while forming meaningful relationships with other patients and some staff."

Reaume is also a historian who has authored *Remembrance of Patients Past*, a tapestry of stories about the daily lives of people confined behind brick walls that patients built themselves.

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# Take These Broken Wings

A new feature-length documentary by American director and psychotherapist Daniel Mackler shows that people can recover fully from schizophrenia without psychiatric medication.

**Take These Broken Wings** centres on the lives of two women who both recovered from severe schizophrenia. The film traces the roots of their illness to childhood trauma, and details their successful psychotherapy with gifted clinicians.

The first woman is Joanne Greenberg, who has been fully recovered for fifty years. She's the author of the bestselling 1964 novel *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden*.

The second is Catherine Penney, a mental health nurse in California, thirty years recovered, whose healing tale was chronicled by her therapist, Dr. Daniel Dorman, in the book *Dante's Cure: A Journey Out Of Madness*.

Their accounts are interwoven with interviews of giants in the field of schizophrenia recovery. These include Dr. Peter Breggin, the renowned author of *Toxic Psychiatry*, Robert Whitaker, journalist and author of *Mad In America* and *Anatomy Of An Epidemic* and Bertram Karon, PhD, the author of *Psychotherapy Of Schizophrenia: Treatment Of Choice*.

Different Thoughts, a psychiatric survivor website recently offered this comment on the film's effectiveness:

**"Take These Broken Wings** is a brilliant defense of not only psychotherapy, but all alternative approaches to crisis that aim at understanding, rather than at the mere suppression of 'symptoms'.

At the same time, it manages to convincingly debunk the medical model, while it navigates successfully around the trap of carrying on an aggressive controversy against psychiatry, or glorifying crisis as such."

Daniel Mackler shared some of his personal experience on his own website recently:

"I ended my private practice on March 1st, 2010, for a variety of reasons, and these reasons are complex. Many of my colleagues had difficulty understanding why I am doing it...

I started being a therapist because I felt the calling—and now my callings have changed. Part of me is now simply excited to try new things in my life (like filmmaking and traveling and deeper self-exploration.

Part of me feels that I can contribute more to the world in other ways—and that it is presently my job to find out what those other ways are.

Yet at the same time, over the past few years I have begun to wonder if the responsibility inherent in being a therapist is impeding parts of my own healing journey. Part of me is still traumatized by my childhood, and I want to give myself the best opportunity to heal. I don't yet know where this journey will take me, and this is both exciting and terrifying!"

## Anatomy Of An Epidemic

Robert Whitaker is an award-winning science and history writer, whose best-selling *Mad In America* raised important questions, such as why do schizophrenic patients in North America fare worse than patients in the poorest countries of the world, and how do pharmaceutical companies skew their studies to prove their products' effectiveness.

His newest book, *Anatomy Of An Epidemic*, carries on in the hard-hitting tradition of his first. Whitaker poses the reader with a medical mystery: Why have mental illness disability rates tripled in the US since 1987, and increased six-fold since 1955?

*Anatomy of an Epidemic* challenges readers to think through that question themselves. First, Whitaker investigates what is known today about the biological causes of mental disorders.

Do psychiatric medications fix “chemical imbalances” in the brain, or do they, in fact, *create* them? Researchers spent decades studying that question, and by the late 1980s, they had their answer. Readers will be startled—and dismayed—to discover what was reported in the scientific journals.

Then comes the scientific query at the heart of this book: During the past fifty years, when investigators looked at how psychiatric drugs affected *long-term* outcomes, what did they find? Did they discover that the drugs help people stay well? Function better? Enjoy good physical health? Or did they find that these medications, for some paradoxical

reason, *increase* the likelihood that people will become chronically ill, less able to function well, more prone to physical illness?

This is the first book to look at the merits of psychiatric medications through the prism of long-term results.

Are long-term recovery rates higher for medicated or unmedicated schizophrenia patients? Does taking an antidepressant decrease or increase the risk that a depressed person will become disabled by the disorder?

Do bipolar patients fare better today than they did forty years ago, or much worse? When the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) studied the long-term outcomes of children with ADHD, did they determine that stimulants provide any benefit?

By the end of this review of the outcomes literature, readers are certain to have a haunting question of their own: Why have the results from these long-term studies—all of which point to the same startling conclusion—been kept from the public?

In this compelling history, Whitaker also tells the personal stories of children and adults swept up in this maelstrom.

North America has indeed been hit by an epidemic of disabling mental illness, and yet, as *Anatomy of an Epidemic* reveals, the medical blueprints for curbing that epidemic have already been drawn up.

*There is a possibility that Robert Whitaker may be speaking in Whitehorse sometime in the coming months. Stay in touch with SOS for more details.*