

New staging systems may improve assessment and treatment of mental disorders

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A paper recently published in *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* introduces new systems of classification of mental disorders that may supplement diagnostic formulations. Characterizing each stage of an illness demarcates major prognostic and therapeutic differences among patients who otherwise seem to be deceptively similar since they share the same psychiatric diagnosis.

The staging method, whereby a disorder is characterized according to its seriousness, extension, development and features, is attracting increasing attention in [clinical psychology](#) and psychiatry. The aim of this systematic review was to critically summarize the tools that are available for reproducing and standardizing the clinical intuitions that are involved in a staging formulation. A comprehensive research was conducted on the MEDLINE, PsycINFO, EMBASE and Cochrane databases from inception to May 2012. The following search terms were used: 'stage/staging' AND 'psychiatric disorder/mental disorder/schizophrenia/[mood disorder](#)/anxiety disorder/substance use disorder/eating disorder'. A total of 78 studies were identified for inclusion in the review. The investigators discussed studies addressing or related to the issue of staging in a number of mental disorders (schizophrenia, unipolar depression, [bipolar disorder](#), panic disorder, substance use disorders, anorexia and bulimia nervosa).

The literature indicates that disorders have a longitudinal development or a treatment history that can be categorized according to stages. The Authors proposed staging formulations for the above-mentioned psychiatric disorders. Staging models offer innovative assessment tools for clinical psychologists and psychiatrists. Characterizing each stage of an illness demarcates

major prognostic and therapeutic differences among patients who otherwise seem to be deceptively similar since they share the same psychiatric diagnosis. A stage 0 to denote an at-risk condition does not appear to be warranted at the current state of research.

More information: Cosci, F. and Fava, G.A. Staging of Mental Disorders: Systematic Review. *Psychother Psychosom* 2013;82:20-34.

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