

EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure being a guest editor for this issue. In recent years, *Psychiatria Danubina* has become a leading journal in region. Its long tradition and integrative and multidisciplinary approach addresses a wide audience of health professionals interested in improving and upgrading mental health. Its broad perspective promotes expanding and exchanging ideas and experiences, and therefore represents essential reading. In an era of harmonization and integration, this publication is a step forward in exchange of professional opinion in the region. As a clinician and a teacher, I am personally honored by the opportunity to present some of the work of Serbian psychiatrists, who are persistently upgrading professional standards and who continue to show great scientific and clinical optimism and enthusiasm. My students' and colleagues' scientific, professional and creative contribution to contemporary psychiatry in Serbia makes me very proud.

This issue of *Psychiatria Danubina* includes 15 papers on various topics. First, a group of authors present the genesis of the concept of mental disease and treatment in Serbian medicine, thus telling the story of the historical development of psychiatry in Serbia. The next paper addresses the present situation considering therapeutic guidelines, and attempts to discuss whether we "use or underuse" guidelines which Serbian academia started to publish during the last decade (on behalf of the Serbian Medical Society and/or School of Medicine, University of Belgrade; there are guidelines for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression for the time being). Beyond drug therapy, our everyday practice consists of many types of psychotherapy and occupational therapies. One of the paper explains "Animal-assisted therapy" as a method of treatment in the rehabilitation of many illnesses and conditions, which is still not applied frequently enough in our

milieu. Finally, we decided to include a paper editorial to tell the interesting story about psychiatry and movies, as one of the most potent and substantial forms of mass communication, especially in relation to issues of mental illness.

The research articles illustrate the great diversity of topics which are being focussed on by Belgrade psychiatrists and clinical psychologist nowadays. In order to improve the status of psychiatry, psychiatrists and our patients, we started the evaluation of students' attitudes toward psychiatry as a career, as well as the effects of implementation of anti-stigma programs, particularly on school-age children. The results of both studies are presented in this issue. Moreover, the study that aims to evaluate the connection between stress related disorders and the quality of life strengthens the view that prevention of stress is essential in all strategies of quality of life improvement and mental care planning in the country. Gender identity disorder is associated with severe stress and affects deep instincts and the person as a whole. We show our analyses of socio-demographic data and also we include two outstanding case-reports in order to get to know better how transsexual persons with homosexual orientation present in our surroundings.

Several research articles address two core psychiatric disorders, i.e. schizophrenia and depression. We demonstrate the meaning and the importance of soft neurological signs when subtyping the patients with schizophrenia into positive/negative types and also the power of a standard neuropsychological battery to separate the paranoid form from other schizophrenia-types. Regarding depression, two groups from the Institute of Psychiatry included special patient populations in their research and showed that older age patients and those with alcohol abuse in their life history responded well to tianeptine either in terms of efficacy or in terms of side effects, while treatment resistant patients showed improvement when lamotrigine was added to antidepressants.

Finally, this issue provides a retrospective of the recent WPA Co-sponsored XIII National congress of the Serbian Psychiatric Association “Psychiatry for the person and social transition”, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, Republic of Serbia and Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Belgrade, Serbia, from 19-22 October 2008 (www.application.ups-spa.org)), which was held in parallel with XI Central European Neuropsychopharmacological Symposium and First Zonal School for Young Psychiatrists.

In the years that have passed, our collaboration was not just a professional one, but beyond that, it has been a long lasting friendship. Looking forward to further scientific joint projects,

I remain
Sincerely yours,

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