

## **CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER**

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The publication of the Clinical Practice Guidelines (American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2001) for borderline personality disorder represents an important milestone in the emergence of personality disorder as an important domain of psychopathology. The practice guidelines take their place alongside other guidelines published for well-recognized syndromes including mood disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia. That borderline personality disorder should be placed in the same category reflects the gradually consolidating recognition of the importance of this category in clinical practice. From being a somewhat fringe disorder it moves to a more central role within general psychiatric thinking.

This development clearly has major implications for the field. It can only bring increasing attention to the importance of personality disorders and contribute to the development of systematic treatment based on clearly understood constructs and empirical investigations. The guidelines have many positive features—they recognize the multidimensional nature of borderline pathology; they recommend a flexible approach that is tailored to the needs of problems of individual patients; and they note that multiple interventions combining different therapeutic approaches may contribute to successful outcomes. Despite this progress and the achievement it represents, some reservations have been widely expressed about the guidelines themselves. Although the authors have made a laudable attempt to offer objective opinions and to distill clinical opinion in an unbiased way, the fact remains that many of the recommendations are open to debate because the evidential base on which they had to draw is far more limited than that for other syndromes. The guidelines are, however, likely to exert a considerable impact on clinical opinion and clinical practice. For this reason, the *Journal of Personality Disorders* thought it appropriate to invite commentary on the guidelines from clinicians and experts representing a wide range of opinions. To achieve this, Dr. John Oldham, the senior author of the guidelines, was asked to provide a brief overview of the process. Subsequently, commentaries were obtained from Peter Tyrer, Cynthia Sanderson, Tom McGlashan, and Joel Paris. Together they represent, if not the total array of opinion available, at least a broad set of different viewpoints that throw the

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guidelines into a slightly different perspective. We hope that this will help the readers to appreciate them in new ways and recognize their strengths and limitations. The commentaries should be examined in the context of the guidelines themselves that were published by the APA (2001).

#### **REFERENCES**

- ▶ Oldham, J. M., Gabbard, G. O., Goin, M. K., Gunderson, J., Soloff, P., Spiegel, D., Stone, M., & Phillips, K. A. (2001). Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158, 1-52.