

# Preface

Individuals with psychological disorders are disproportionately affected by chronic disease, which presents a significant health disparity that is underrecognized and underaddressed. Physical and psychological illnesses co-occur more often than not in clinical populations, and this co-occurrence is associated with greater impairment, lower adherence, poor treatment response, lower quality of life, increased healthcare costs, and higher mortality rates. This book is the first comprehensive resource regarding psychological co-morbidities of physical illness. It serves as both a handbook for clinicians who care for patients with co-morbidities as well as a call for research that increases our understanding of the connection between physical and psychological illness, with the ultimate goal of improving the health of people with psychological disorders.

A constellation of behavioral, pharmacological, and physiological factors play a role in the increased risk for disease among individuals with psychological disorders. Behavioral factors include higher rates of smoking, obesity, and unhealthy behaviors. Psychopharmacology has also been implicated given that many drugs promote weight gain and metabolic syndrome. Physiological processes of psychological distress, including hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis dysfunction, inflammation, and autonomic dysfunction, can also manifest in the development of chronic disease. In addition to identifying the most prevalent psychological co-morbidities of physical illness, this book explores how behavioral, pharmacological, and physiological factors converge to put individuals with psychological disorders at greater risk for disease.

This book is firmly rooted in the philosophy of evidence-based practice and was designed to help narrow the existing research to practice gap. One of the most commonly cited reasons by clinicians for not using evidence-based treatments is that randomized clinical trials do not reflect their consumers who have multiple co-morbidities. Traditionally, randomized clinical trials, by having a disease-specific focus and excluding people with comorbid psychological disorders, have offered very few insights and discoveries regarding the treatment of co-morbidities or the underlying processes of comorbid physical and psychological illnesses. As a result, clinicians have very few resources that lend insight into the complex treatment

decisions necessary for patients with co-morbidities. This book will assist both the clinician and the researcher by providing information regarding the prevalence of various psychological co-morbidities in populations with specific physical illnesses; physiological, pharmacological, and behavioral mechanisms of co-morbidities; and implications for assessment and treatment in these populations. Each chapter focuses on a physical illness and reviews research pertinent to the psychological co-morbidities associated with that illness concluding with clinical considerations specific to the comorbid population. Physical illnesses of focus include the largest contributors to mortality in our population, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, tobacco dependence, cardiovascular disease, and cancer; as well as those that are associated with significant healthcare burden, including chronic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, HIV/AIDS, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, multiple sclerosis, and dementia.

Although a significant body of research has specifically focused on psychological co-morbidities of physical illnesses, the research is distributed across disparate fields, including medicine, behavioral medicine, psychiatry, nursing, and mental health services. This book brings this research together, making it a valuable resource for professionals in each of these fields who may not otherwise be exposed to the vast array of findings, discoveries, and clinical information regarding psychological co-morbidities of physical illness.

This book also serves as a reference for clinicians, researchers, and trainees who work with comorbid populations in clinical, public health, and academic settings. The content is relevant to the work of psychologists, mental health providers, epidemiologists, social workers, nurses, nurse practitioners, primary care physicians, medical specialists, and other allied healthcare workers. Because patients with psychological and medical co-morbidities may be encountered in either mental health or medical settings, assessment and treatment issues are discussed from both perspectives. Psychological conditions can sometimes be overlooked in medical settings, just as physical illnesses can sometimes be overlooked in mental health settings. This book informs practitioners about common co-morbidities, the implications of the comorbidity, as well as how to assess and treat in that setting. Included are brief assessment tools, practical summaries of the treatment outcome literature, and discussion of challenging clinical issues. Finally, by bringing together the literature on psychological and physical co-morbidities, important unanswered clinical questions and avenues for future research are highlighted.

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Psychological Co-morbidities of Physical Illness

A Behavioral Medicine Perspective

Pagoto, S. (Ed.)

2011, XI, 466 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4419-0030-2