



Preface
Geriatric mental health



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Guest Editor

This issue of the *Clinics in Geriatric Medicine* is very timely. As baby boomers move into their middle years, they are often dealing with aging parents with a variety of mental disorders. In addition, they are moving closer to their later years and are beginning to worry about their own risks for mental disorders, such as depression and Alzheimer's disease.

This issue brings together a number of nationally recognized experts to share their areas of expertise as they relate to mental health and aging. In this text, we address the nature and prevalence of late-life mental disorders as well as the challenge of appropriate use of mood or mind-altering drugs in the elderly.

The major geriatric mental health areas are covered with a focus on diagnosis and current treatment options. These include Alzheimer's disease and related disorders such as delirium, mood disorders, late-life psychoses, and anxiety disorders.

Behavioral and psychological signs and symptoms of dementia exact a significant emotional and financial toll on our society and therefore receive special attention as does the use of electroconvulsive therapy, which can literally be lifesaving in the elderly.

Alcohol and substance abuse are a growing problem among the elderly, as is the need to educate health care providers in how to deal more appropriately with end-of-life issues. These issues are addressed in a thorough, practical fashion.

Lastly, it is projected that long-term care use will increase significantly in the next decades. We already know that 70% to 90% of nursing home residents have one or more diagnosable psychiatric disorders, usually a dementing process. Consequently, the needs and issues relative to mental health in long-term care are included.

I hope this issue will prove useful for primary care physicians, psychiatrists, and other health care providers who will be seeing an ever-growing population of older patients with mental health problems.

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