



January 2023

More on SWOT analysis

I enjoyed reading the optimistic outlook for psychiatry outlined in your SWOT analysis (“Contemporary psychiatry: A SWOT analysis,” *CURRENT PSYCHIATRY*, January 2023, p. 16-19,27, doi:10.12788/cp.0320). I agree with the challenges ahead, including the challenge of keeping up with the explosion of knowledge in relation to the brain, emotions, and the complex interactions of genetics, environment, and biology. I’m excited by the movements in psychopharmacology, which hold promises for new, more effective, less toxic treatments for some of our most challenging disorders.

I think, though, you misplaced an opportunity as a threat in your assessment that the increase in the amount of advanced practice psychiatric nurses (PMHAPRNs) presents a threat to psychiatry. The presence of an increased number of PMHAPRNs provides access to a larger number of people needing treatment by qualified, skilled mental health professionals and an opportunity for psychiatrists to participate in highly effective teams of psychiatric clinicians. This workforce-building is of particular importance during our current clinician shortage, especially within psychiatry. Most research has shown that advanced practice nurses’

quality of care is competitive with that of physicians with similar experience, and that patient satisfaction is high. Advanced practice nurses are more likely than physicians to provide care in underserved populations and in rural communities. We are educated to practice independently within our scope, to standards established by our professional organizations as well as American Psychiatric Association (APA) clinical guidelines. I hope you will reconsider your view of your PMHAPRN colleagues as a threat and see them as a positive contribution to your chosen field of psychiatry, like the APA has shown in their choice of including a PMHAPRN as a clinical expert team member on the SMI Adviser initiative.

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Dr. Nasrallah responds

Thank you for your letter regarding my SWOT article. It was originally written for the newsletter of the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association, comprised of 1,000 psychiatrists. To them, nurse practitioners (NPs) are regarded as a threat because some mental health care systems have been laying off psychiatrists and hiring NPs to lower costs. This obviously is perceived as a threat. I do agree with you that well-qualified NPs are providing needed mental health services in underserved areas (eg, inner cities and rural areas), where it is very difficult to recruit psychiatrists due to the severe shortage nationally.

Henry A. Nasrallah, MD, DLFAPA
Editor-in-Chief

More on the transdiagnostic model

I just had the pleasure of reading your February 2023 editorial

(“Depression and schizophrenia: Many biological and clinical similarities,” *CURRENT PSYCHIATRY*, February 2023, p. 3-5, doi:10.12788/cp.0331) and it was truly wonderful. For years it has seemed to me that the somewhat unnatural divisions in psychiatry with respect to diagnosis were a necessary evil, for numerous reasons. It seems the tide is turning, however, and for those of us who have always afforded a primacy to treating a patient’s symptoms rather than a diagnosis in a book, it seems the research is at last supporting that approach. Your points about insurance companies and the mendacity and cupidity that underlies their policies are very well stated. Thank you for another excellent, timely, and eloquent editorial!

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I completely agree with your promotion of a unified transdiagnostic model. All of this makes sense on the continuum of consciousness—restricted consciousness represents fear, whereas wide consciousness represents complete connectivity (love in the spiritual sense). Therefore, a threat not resolved can lead to defeat and an unresolved painful defeat can lead to a psychotic projection. Is it no surprise, then, that a medication such as quetiapine can treat the whole continuum from anxiety at low doses to psychosis at high doses?

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Disclosures

The authors report no financial relationships with any companies whose products are mentioned in their letters, or with manufacturers of competing products.

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