



From the editor

Acknowledging my inner hoarder

Compulsive hoarders collect useless things—most often newspapers, magazines, old clothing, bags, books, mail, notes, and lists, according to this month’s article by Jamie Feusner, MD, and Sanjaya Saxena, MD, of the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute (*page 12*).

Initially I thought I didn’t save all of those items since I don’t save old clothes and bags. Then I remembered the closetful of clothes that don’t fit me. I lost weight last year, but—playing the odds—these clothes may fit me again someday and I hesitate to discard them. I also remembered all those APA-logo scientific meeting tote bags I haven’t thrown away.

These may be small obsessive-compulsive signs compared with my hoarding of medical journals. To my amazement, I have more than 2,000 journals in my office. I haven’t looked at more than a handful and probably didn’t read most when I received them. Why do I keep them? Could I have “problems with information processing, obsessional anxiety, and avoiding decisions” that Drs. Feusner and Saxena suggest as targets for psychotherapeutic intervention?

Maybe it’s rational to keep these journals in case I want to look something up, but then why save CURRENT PSYCHIATRY? Its full text is available online.

My best explanation is that old journals are an interior design element. William Morris, the 19th century designer and proponent of the arts and crafts movement, counseled: “Have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.”

Old journals may be visual clutter, but they are beautiful to me because they remind me that psychiatric treatments are backed by decades of study and research. When I wonder if I know anything at all (you have those moments, don’t you?), glancing at my shelves of journals reassures me and gives me courage to continue the perpetually astonishing unknown that is clinical practice.

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