



Concepts and Controversies in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (Series in Anxiety and Related Disorders)

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Few syndromes in psychopathology generate as much popular curiosity and clinical exploration as does obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Since the 1970s, research on OCD has increased exponentially. Specific advances include an improved grasp of the heterogeneity of the disorder, identification of putative subtyping schemes, and the development of increasingly sophisticated theoretical models of the etiology and maintenance. Perhaps most importantly, research has led to advances in treatment; and whereas the first-line therapies (cognitive-behavioral therapy and serotonergic medication) are not entirely effective for every sufferer, they have transformed OCD from an unmanageable lifetime affliction into a treatable problem that need not reduce quality of life. Despite the aforementioned advances, there have emerged a number of sharp disagreements concerning OCD. Differences have surfaced over phenomenological issues, etiological models, and approaches to treatment, and often occur (but not exclusively) along disciplinary lines between biologically oriented and cognitive-behaviorally oriented authorities. For example, medical approaches posit that abnormal biological processes cause OCD, whereas psychosocial formulations emphasize the role of learning and dysfunctional cognitions. Yet because theoretical conjecture and empirical findings from within each tradition are typically addressed toward distinct and narrow audiences, clinicians, researchers, and students with broad interests are hindered from gaining a clear grasp of the diverse (and sometimes polarized) perspectives.

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