

Psychiatria Danubina: Where we are and where we are going

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Psychiatria Danubina is an open access international journal of transdisciplinary psychiatry and global mental health published by the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb, Medicinska naklada Zagreb and Pro mente d.o.o. Zagreb on the behalf of the Danubian Psychiatric Organization which is a collective member of the World Psychiatric Organization. Danubian Psychiatric Organization involves psychiatrists and psychologists from 17 countries: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldavia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine. The journal welcomes and publishes articles from anywhere in the world across all subfield of psychiatry. As an open access journal, papers are published in regular issues free of charge and are freely available to anyone with an internet connection. Supplements feature congress and conference papers and are funded by congress organizers. All articles published in Psychiatria Danubina undergo a rigorous peer-review process to ensure content quality and validity, requiring two independent positive reviews for acceptance.

Publishing as an important form of public and global communication, carries heavy ethical and epistemic responsibilities what was clearly evident during the COVID-19 syndemic (Jakovljevic, 2021). Embodying principles of the global learning organization, collective intelligence, epistemic justice, transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, hodegetics and transformative culture of empathy, Psychiatria Danubina constantly strives to uphold the caliber of its published articles, stimulating perpetual scientific and humanistic evolution. “The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number” and “Serving a Purpose Larger than Yourself” are the important principals of our editorial policy, which seeks to bridge political divides and transcend political landscapes and address and overcome epistemic injustice.

Psychiatria Danubina was criticized for supporting the University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the International Academy of Science and Art in Bosnia and Herzegovina in creating two new journals “Medicina Academica Integrativa” and “Science, Art and Religion”.

The criticism argued that “both of mentioned journals are out of scope of Psychiatria Danubina journal” (Masic, 2021). This editorial paper titled “Predatory journals and publishers – Dilemmas: How to asses it and how to avoid it?” (Medical Archives October 2021,75(5):328-334) represents a clear example of epistemic injustice. Since there is no health without mental health, Psychiatria Danubina is dedicated to fostering creative alliances between psychiatry and other professions and scientific disciplines to promote integrative health care and mental well-being for all. By supporting these two new journals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Psychiatria Danubina pursue three interconnected aims: 1. promoting mental health sciences and helping heal transgenerational traumas and wounds and resolve conflicts from a public mental health perspective; 2. advancing international scientific projects, and 3. supporting PhD studies (see Jakovljevic 2021,2024). As Albert Einstein (1947) observed “good acts are like good poems. One may easily get their drift, but they are not always rationally understood”.

Psychiatria Danubina was indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection (Science Citation Index Expanded) until its deselection in February 2023, which resulted in the loss of its Journal Impact Factor (IF). Before delisting, the journal’s IF in 2021 was 2.696, placed it in the solidly mid-tier (G3) in Psychiatry. With the two-year embargo period now concluded, a new application is planned for autumn of this year.

KEY ASPECTS AND SPECIFICITY OF PSYCHIATRIA DANUBINA

Through its hero’s journey, Psychiatria Danubina has pioneered some new topics in psychiatry and mental health sciences. Psychiatry has never been as scientific, effective and efficient as today, but as it is not at the level as it could and should be, we need to unify all scientific and humanistic disciplines dealing with the human mind, mental order and mental disorder, mental wellness and mental illness, mental health, mental disease and mental sickness.

Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Approach

The history of psychiatry has always been characterized by different schools and branches, for example biological psychiatry, pharmacopsychiatry, psychodynamic psychiatry, social psychiatry, etc., some of which have dominated during different periods. The growing challenges of mental health problems in our VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) misinfodemic world have highlighted the need for a new field called transdisciplinary integrative psychiatry. Psychiatry must evolve from a pluralistic coexistence of the many separated and conflicting disciplines to a coherent transdisciplinary and comprehensive mental health science and practice. The concept of transdisciplinary holistic integrative psychiatry is built on the premise that human beings in health and disease are complex systems of dynamically interacting biological, psychological, social, cultural, energetic, informational and spiritual processes. From its inception, *Psychiatria Danubina* has promoted a concept of transdisciplinary, integrative and holistic psychiatry in which science meets medicine, humanity, spirituality, virtual reality and artificial intelligence (Jakovljević, 2008b, 2011a, 2025).

The future of psychiatry depends to a large extent on the definition of mental health and mental disorders - that is, the domain that psychiatry deals with, its competences and capabilities which determine its position in society. We emphasize importance of the overcoming simplistic, reductionist and fragmentary views of mental disorders by promoting holistic understanding the complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors and mechanisms. It is also equally important to overcome silo mentality in psychiatry (Jakovljević, 2016) what can help to decrease epistemic injustice and replication crisis in psychiatry (Jakovljević, 2025). Culture of empathy promotes dialogue, cooperation, mutual respect, trust and the exercise of epistemic humility.

The 29th Danubian Psychiatric Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia 2021 was devoted to four challenging topics, and among them: "Transdisciplinary integrative approach in psychiatry, personalized medicine and creative psychopharmacotherapy" (see *Psychiatria Danubina* 2021; 33(suppl 4, part III), s1011-12429) "Comorbidity, resilience, and epigenetics in psychiatry from the perspective of predictive, preventive and person centered medicine"(see *Psychiatria Danubina* 2021; 33(suppl 4), s402-s789),

Medicine of the Person and Precise Person-Centered Narrative Medicine in Psychiatry

The conceptual shift from a one-size-fits-all approach blockbuster medicine and stratified medicine to precision, person-centered narrative medicine brings the old dream of "the right care and treatment to the right person at the right time" into the reality of clinical practice in psychiatry (Jakovljević, 2008a). Each patient is a unique, responsive and responsible person. Originally, "medicine of the person" (Paul Tournier 1898-1986) treats patients as whole persons - as unified beings of body, psyche and spirit connected with their life stories. Personalized medicine considers clinical and personality characteristics of patients to predict disease susceptibility, aid in diagnosis, and apply tailor-made individualized therapy. Precision medicine searches objective measures, biomarkers, endophenotypes, or biosignatures for pharmacotherapy selection. Person-centered medicine additionally promotes patients as proactive partners in treatment. The concept of transdisciplinary integrative psychiatry integrates person-centered psychiatry, precision and neuroscience-based psychiatry, value-based psychiatry and narrative psychiatry in a complementary and integrative manner. Person-centered narrative psychiatry is based on a culture of clinical or therapeutic empathy - a very special way of being with patients and their families and, of course with colleagues. It refers to better understanding of patients' mental state, needs, beliefs, values, emotions, situations, narratives and perspectives. Empathic understanding and communicating play important roles in more effective and successful physician-patient relationships and therapeutic alliances and can be directly therapeutic by increasing placebo response in patients and activating natural healing mechanisms.

Theoretical Psychiatry and Epistemic Justice

Due to the epistemic injustice, psychiatry is often criticized, especially by antipsychiatrists, as being "the science of lies". The true is that psychiatry today still suffers from scientism - when science is based more on faith, epistemic biases and misinformation than on truth and facts (evidence-biased psychiatry, eminence-based psychiatry, marketing-based psychiatry, fashion-based psychiatry, etc.). Epistemic injustice, which may be incidental and structural (systemic), are commonly associated with certain theoretical conceptions of mental disorders (for example Cotton's "bacteriological model of madness" associated with surgical removing tonsils, teeth, and sometimes colons; lobotomy as a neurosurgical treatment for psychiatric disorders). Epistemology of

psychopathology, psychiatric research and clinical practice is very challenging part of the theoretical psychiatry (Jakovljevic, 2013 & 2025). The concept of epistemic injustice, as a form of systemic discrimination relating to the creation of knowledge in psychiatry, urges a new approach to think and understand psychiatric practice in research, definition, classification, diagnosis, consultation and treatment of mental disorders. Epistemic justice in research, classification, diagnosis and consultation, and treatment is a positive ideal not only in the field of mental health, psychiatry and medicine but beyond (Okoroji, et al., 2023. Kidd, et al., 2025).

Geopsychiatry and Global Mental Health

Geopsychiatry is an emerging interdisciplinary field and subspeciality in psychiatry that explores the relationship between geographic, geopolitical, and sociocultural factors and mental health (Torales, et al. 2025). Mental health as a global public good is a fundamental issue and challenge from geopsychiatric perspective. Public and global mental health has not been well covered in medical education and practice (Jakovljevic, 2016). Psychiatry is a medical discipline, but it is more than that. Therefore, it must not be closed in on itself, but must be present in the local and global community where psychological problems and disorders arise and manifest, and act there in order to prevent them, correctly recognize them and treat them successfully and on time. Global mental health today is a re-emerging movement and challenging discipline, “with specific departments established at several universities, textbooks and journals devoted to the subject” (Sartorius, 2016). Complicated connections between epistemic injustice, national cultures and political policies (Kidd et al., 2025, Jakovljevic, 2011) are important issues from the geopsychiatric and global mental health perspective.

Culture of Mind and Mental Health

Our mind is like a garden which can be cultivated or neglected, and we are its master gardeners. We can cultivate this garden, or we can ignore it and let it develop whatever way it will. But make no mistake: we will reap the harvest of our work or our neglect (John Kehoe: *Mind Power Into the 21st Century*. <https://cdn.oujdalibrary.com>). So, our mental health depends on cultivation of our mind and there is a big difference between healthy culture of mind and toxic cultures of mind (Jakovljevic, 2024a,b). Mental health involves cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions and refers to the capacity to: 1. satisfy our authentic needs, realize our abilities, live a life with purpose

and meaning, and make positive contributions to communities; 2. cope effectively with life’s challenges and stresses developing resilience and antifragility 3. establish and maintain positive and emphasizing relationships with others feeling connected and supported; 4. experience peace of mind, contentment, happiness and joy; and 5. take responsibility for oneself and others as appropriate while respecting universal human rights (Jakovljevic, 2016). Culture of empathy promotes healthy, creative, flourishing, and well-functioning families, communities, nations, societies, and civilizations. Lack of empathy, misperception of the others or dysempathy causes problems in communication, education, personal growth and psychosocial development, private, social and business relationships, so it is a key component of many psychosocial problems such as child abuse, divorces, violation of human rights, crime, violence, war, etc., as well as of some mental disorders like schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorders, depression, autism, etc. Empathology - a new science of mutual wellbeing and understanding - may be of utmost importance in psychiatry and mental health sciences and in promoting mental health and a culture of empathy. Toxic and trauma-genic (narcissistic, paranoid, nihilistic) cultures of mind are responsible for alarming increase of mental disorders. Culture of empathy drives universal human rights, our common values, trust, cooperation, resilience, coherence, and humanistic self, and so bridges individual, family, public and global mental health for the better world in peace and global security

Mental Health and Human Rights

Mental health as a global public good is a fundamental human right, but in practice it is not respected enough and in a proper way. Human rights are bi-directionally associated with mental health and cultures of mind. Promoting human rights at individual, family, community and global levels is essential for promoting mental health and preventing mental disorders. Mental health should not be defined only by adjustment to a particular socio-cultural order, but also by the extent to which that sociocultural order satisfies authentic human needs and human rights (Jakovljevic, 2016). Violation of children’s human rights within families results in pathological injunctions within life-script such as “don’t be”, “don’t be close”, “don’t belong”, “don’t be happy”, “don’t trust”, “don’t grow up”, “don’t succeed”, “don’t be the sex you are”, etc., which lead to mental health problems and disorders. A culture of empathy stresses the importance of cooperation and collectivism and places universal human rights principles and standards at the core of mental health promotion and treatment of mental disorders (Jakovljevic 2025).

Culture of Empathy, Hodegetics and Education in Medicine and Psychiatry

Education in medicine and psychiatry faces numerous challenges and dilemmas. The responsibility lies within medical and psychiatric hodegetics, which involves evidence based medicine and epistemic justice, value based medicine/psychiatry, narrative medicine/psychiatry and whole person-centered medicine/psychiatry (Jakovljevic, et al., 2019). Empathy in psychiatric and medical education in general is essential for developing therapeutic doctor-patient communication and enabling doctors to understand and connect with patients on deeper levels. It fosters rapport, trust, therapeutic alliance (alliance is much better than passive compliance), placebo response and significantly improves patient satisfaction, adherence to treatment and treatment outcome. Psychiatrists who practice an empathizing person-centered approach are more effective than those practicing detached, cold rational concern. Culture of empathy is beneficial for both patients and doctors as well as for health-care system.

Psychiatry, Spirituality and Religion

Throughout history, psychiatry has often ignored spiritual and religious dimensions in mental health and illness, while religions defined mental disorders as evil spirit possessions or punishment for sins. Both psychiatry and religion have been victims of pseudoscientific denial and distorted explanations. Mental well-being, mental salutogenesis, resilience, spirituality and positive mental health have become essential terms and construct in transdisciplinary integrative psychiatry, spiritual psychiatry, and positive psychiatry and psychology (Jakovljevic 2017). Integration of religion and spirituality into psychiatric practice, education and research holds promise for growing understanding and cooperation between religious and mental health professionals. This is why one of the challenging topics at the 29th Danubian Psychiatric Symposium, Zagreb, Croatia 2021 was "Psychiatry, spirituality and religion from the perspective of the public and global mental health" (see *Psychiatria Danubina* 2021(suppl 4, part II), s795-984).

Digital Mental Health and Artificial Intelligence

Contemporary psychiatry increasingly uses artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and deep learning (DL) in its theory and practice, which offer many benefits. It is crucial for psychiatry to better define the etiology and pathopsychophysiology, psychodynamics,

and socio-cultural dynamics of mental disorders, as well as taxonomy, classification, diagnostics and early recognition, prevention and treatment of mental illnesses, and promotion of salutogenesis, mental health care and well-being with a little help of artificial intelligence (see Briganti 2023, Gilbert et al. 2023). Epistemic injustice related to AI and possible automation epistemicide is a growing concern (Mollema 2025) generally as well as in psychiatry and mental health sciences. As psychopathologization is transmitted through media (virtual reality, cyberspace) to the wider population, cyberpsychiatry - a new discipline within contemporary psychiatry - is becoming increasingly important.

CONCLUSION

Psychiatria Danubina, an international journal of transdisciplinary psychiatry and global mental is devoted to promotion of the three missions: 1. to study, diagnose, treat and prevent mental disorders, 2. to help other branches of medicine to promote whole person-centered medicine based on the culture of empathy; and 3. to promote public and global mental health based on the culture of empathy and the concepts of compassionate society and empathic civilization instead of growing the clash of civilizations. The journal is recognized not only as a bridge between Danube countries during the age of the iron curtain but also between Middle- and East-European Psychiatry and the global scientific community.

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