

## **Letters: Therapists seek to help, not harm**

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Daniel Akst has joined the many who have written irresponsibly about psychiatric disorders. If anything, psychiatric disorders are underdiagnosed in the general population, as study after study has shown.

For example, many individuals with mood and anxiety disorders who see their primary care physicians don't have the proper diagnosis or treatment prescribed, because it is very easy to overlook these problems. Fairly high rates of mental illness in the general population have been found repeatedly over the decades in careful epidemiological studies.

Akst need not worry -- most of these people will not find their way into the clutches of mental health professionals who he believes are looking to make a buck. Uninformed attitudes like his, coupled with restricted access to mental health professionals, have taken care of that. The issue that mental health professionals working on the DSM-5 are grappling with is not whether a mental disorder is present, but rather how to properly classify these conditions so that a better understanding of their underlying physiological causes can be gained, and more specific and effective treatments can be devised. Having a more precise diagnostic classification system is not the same as creating more mental illness; the size of the pie remains the same.

*Dr. Michael Schwartz, Stony Brook*