Document Title: Update: Triennial Report of the Section “Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders”- 2023-2026
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During the 2023–2026 triennium, the WPA Section on Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders advanced research, clinical practice, education and international collaboration across anxiety or fear-related disorders, obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, and disorders due to addictive behaviours, including problematic Internet use. The Section provided a multidisciplinary forum for clinicians and researchers and collaborated with the World Health Organization, the International College of Obsessive-Compulsive Spectrum Disorders, European College of Neuropsychopharmacology research networks, the Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments, and the European Network for Problematic Usage of the Internet.

Section members contributed substantially to developments in taxonomy and nosology. Their work supported the ICD-11 classification of anxiety or fear-related disorders and obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, including clearer diagnostic groupings and a lifespan perspective. Collaboration with WHO helped consolidate previously separate conditions within the obsessive-compulsive and related disorders grouping, while field research demonstrated improved diagnostic accuracy compared with ICD-10. The Section also promoted recognition of compulsivity as a transdiagnostic domain and contributed to work on gaming disorder, gambling disorder and other problematic behaviours with addictive, impulsive or compulsive features.

Research conducted or reviewed by Section members highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on anxiety, obsessive-compulsive symptoms and problematic Internet use. Global problematic Internet use was estimated at 7.9% in a meta-analysis and exceeded 30% in some low- and middle-income countries. Reviews also identified post-COVID anxiety prevalence ranging from 16.6% to 29.6%, supporting standardized screening, early intervention and evidence-based treatment.

The Section advanced etiological research through genome-wide and epigenome-wide studies identifying genetic and DNA-methylation markers, including pathways relevant to GABAergic signalling and personalized treatment development. Treatment work extended beyond conventional pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy to neuromodulation, immunotherapy and neurosurgical approaches. Members contributed to revised international biological treatment guidelines and to open-access consensus guidance for anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Joint work with CANMAT and ICOCS produced comprehensive clinical recommendations covering diagnosis, psychological and pharmacological interventions, neuromodulation, treatment resistance, children and adolescents, and special populations.

Treatment resistance was another priority. Section members helped establish internationally agreed criteria for treatment-resistant anxiety disorders through a Delphi consensus process, addressing a problem affecting approximately 30% of patients. Similar work was undertaken for obsessive-compulsive disorder, alongside a systematic review of pharmacological, psychotherapeutic and neuro-modulatory options that led to publication of an evidence-based guideline (10.1016/j.jpsychires.2025.12.039).

The Section expanded educational outreach through six freely accessible teaching modules addressing diagnosis, epidemiology, course, neurobiology, treatment and comorbidities. It also supported the five-year BoostRAP programme, involving partners in more than 20 countries, to develop and test digital interventions and policy tools addressing problematic Internet use and digital human rights. Members are leading a Lancet Psychiatry Commission in this field.

Updates were published in World Psychiatry in 2024, with a further update accepted for publication. An

accepted State-of-the-Art Symposium was prepared for the 2026 WPA Congress, and Himanshu Tyagi joined the Section as an OCD expert. The Section mourned the death of its Chair, Professor D. Stein, in December 2025, honouring his longstanding leadership and contribution to its development.