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Medicine and the Mind — The Consequences of Psychiatry's Identity Crisis

Caleb Gardner, M.D., and Arthur Kleinman, M.D.

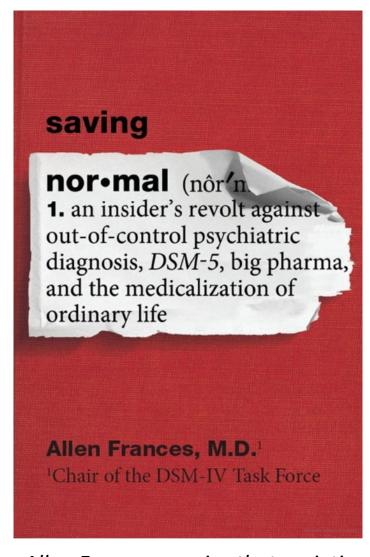
But something has gone wrong in contemporary academic and clinical psychiatry. Checklist-style amalgamations of symptoms have taken the place of thoughtful diagnosis, and trial-and-error "medication management" has taken over practice to an alarming degree.

... Ironically, although these limitations are widely recognized by experts in the field, the prevailing message to the public and the rest of medicine remains that the solution to psychological problems involves matching the "right" diagnosis with the "right" medication.

Consequently, psychiatric diagnoses and medications proliferate under the banner of scientific medicine, though there is no comprehensive biologic understanding of either the causes or the treatments of psychiatric disorders.

... In the meantime, psychiatry finds itself plagued by overprescription of psychiatric medication for a large segment of the population; abandonment and incarceration of people with chronic, severe mental illness; and an increasingly unwieldy diagnostic system of overlapping symptom checklists.

... We believe that a fundamental rethinking of psychiatric knowledge creation and training is in order. If only the highest-quality biologic research were supported, substantial funding could be redirected to psychosocial, cultural, public health, and community studies that directly support the work of practicing psychiatrists responding to the needs of patients, families, and communities.



Allen Frances worries that varieties of normal experience are being pathologized and medicalized...