The Psychotic Continuum: Follow the Evidence, but How is it Interpreted?

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Thanks to C. Ray Lake, MD, PhD, for creating this issue, as well as a forthcoming issue, of Psychiatric Annals. His contribution, and that of the authors he has recruited, represents a provocative and thoughtful series of articles on The Psychotic Continuum across Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder, with contributions from some of our most respected clinician/researchers.

Any clinician or aspiring clinician should not only enjoy but benefit from reading this series of articles, which not only captures an important segment of the history of psychiatry but also reviews the results of genetic research, as well as diagnostic and treatment research. It is clear that these articles have been put together to question the distinction currently made between schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, psychotic bipolar disorder, and psychotic depression. Each article features a slightly different emphasis, but the overall effect is as intended – to question the validity of the quadripartite division currently reflected in our present diagnostic criteria and passed down to us through the history of psychiatry.

I know there are replies to many of the questions raised in these articles, but the questions should challenge the thoughtful clinician. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition, (DSM-V) committees are currently grappling with these issues for the next codification of diagnoses, scheduled to be released in 2013. As chair of the Mood Disorders Workgroup, I am particularly interested in these arguments. This is a very timely series, raising important questions, as well as assertions about the effects of how we classify (or more specifically what we call) the disorders we treat. I hope you find this series as exciting as I have.

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