As people are living longer, more people are developing and suffering from chronic conditions (both medical and psychiatric). Therefore, it seemed reasonable to devote an issue to chronic conditions, such as drug addiction, heart disease, diabetes, and overweight/obesity issues. The authors, who are clinicians in psychiatry, place chronic conditions in perspective, thereby helping to guide both patients and providers.

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The issue begins with a cogent article entitled, “Facing Addiction,” by Dr. Sarah E. Wakeman in which she identifies drug addiction as one of the largest public health crises of modern times, and notes that drug overdose is the leading cause of death for Americans younger than age 50 years, which accounts for the decline in life expectancy in the United States for the past 2 years. Moreover, Dr. Wakeman highlights that our collective approach to addiction treatment differs from how we treat other chronic conditions; drug addiction has historically been treated as a social problem rather than a medical matter, and she calls for a shift in our treatment paradigm.

In the next article, “Facing Heart Disease: A Guide for Psychiatric Clinicians,” Dr. Daniel J. Daunis, Jr. and I highlight the comorbidity of psychiatric illness and heart disease. The fundamentals and etiologies of heart disease are reviewed, and treatment strategies (encompassing behavioral techniques, lifestyle interventions, and pharmacological approaches) are discussed.

In the third article, “Facing Diabetes: A Guide for Psychiatric Providers,” Dr. Maria C. Prom focuses on how diabetes impacts mental health and in turn how mental illness impacts diabetes. Armed with this knowledge, patients, family members, and health care providers will be better positioned to facilitate change (eg, enhanced screening, monitoring, and management) to improve quality of life.

In the last article, “Facing Overweight and Obesity: A Guide for Mental Health Professionals,” Dr. Jonathan R. Stevens and I elaborate on the biological, psychological, social and, cultural aspects of overweight and obesity. We enumerate the pharmacological and nonpharmacological approaches to managing weight and lifestyles to create effective change, as has been the focus of additional efforts.

As the practice of medicine and psychiatry collaborate more closely (eg, with integrated and collaborative care, and with telepsychiatry) our collective experience in managing chronic conditions will be increasingly important. It is our sincere hope that these articles on chronic conditions are engaging, informative, and useful to you and to your patients.

REFERENCES


