

Steven Hyman, MD  
Chair, International Advisory Group  
for the Revision of ICD-10 Mental and Behavioral Disorders ,  
World Health Organization

December 14, 2007

Dear Dr. Hyman,

I am writing you as the President of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD). Our society has more than 1500 members who are mainly concerned with research, training, and treatment of the dissociative disorders.

ISSTD created a DSM-V Task Force in 2004. The task force organized a Dissociative Disorders Research Planning Conference (modeled on the NIH/APA research planning conferences); the Dissociative Disorders Research Planning Conference met in 2005, 2006, and 2007. As a consequence of this process, the convened experts on the dissociative disorders have developed a consensus regarding several aspects of nosology, classification, and diagnostic criteria for the dissociative disorders. The consensus of the committee regarding chronic, complex dissociative presentations will be tested in a field trial that will take place, beginning in mid-2008.

The impetus for this effort, of course, is the pending revision of the DSM. We are also aware that WHO has begun its own process for revising the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). We very much hope to be involved in WHO's process to revise the the dissociative (conversion) disorders section of the ICD.

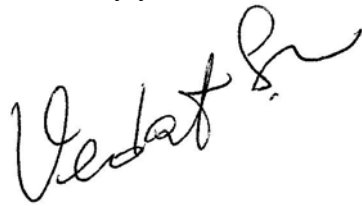
Two points of consensus, which emerged from the meetings of the Dissociative Disorders Research Planning Conferences, are especially relevant to the ICD. First, the attending experts were unanimous in their agreement that the ICD classification of the conversion disorders (i.e., dissociative sensory disorders and dissociative motor disorders) is preferable to DSM-IV's classification of those disorders. Second, the attending experts were also unanimous in their agreement that the ICD classification of the dissociative (conversion) disorders is preferable to the DSM-IV's nosology which overemphasizes typical Western presentations of psychopathology (and neglects important clinical presentations that are typical of non-Western cultures).

The dissociative disorders, especially when chronic, constitute a public health problem. Dissociative disorders can be prevented and treated effectively. Absent treatment, however, the dissociative disorders frequently develop serious complications such as violence, drug abuse, and suicide, with attendant problems in the family, educational settings, and the workplace.

I am writing to you in hopes that the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation may participate in WHO's ICD revision process as it pertains to the dissociative (conversion) disorders. I hope that we can be involved. ISSTD is the only worldwide professional society that is devoted to the dissociative disorders..

I would be glad to receive your advice and comments.

Sincerely yours,



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