

## **FOREWORD**

Luis J. García-López  
Eric A. Storch

As a field, we have made significant progress over the past decade in the study and treatment of childhood anxiety disorders. If one were to closely examine this literature, several particular areas point to this fact. First, more children are being identified and accurately diagnosed at an earlier age. A number of psychometrically sound assessment instruments have been created that allow for children, parents, teachers, and clinicians to report on a child's symptoms thereby enhancing their ability to diagnosis and monitor treatment. Second, effective treatments have been developed and evaluated in methodologically rigorous manners. In the past, the practice of non-evidence based treatments dominated the field with the end result being that many youngsters did not receive care that we can now say "works." Finally, we are beginning to understand the multiple determinants involved in the etiology and maintenance of childhood anxiety disorders with increased clarity. Although still in the early stages, research is investigating the neurological factors associated with childhood anxiety, as well as environmental and behavioral variables that will enable us to develop more effective treatment and prevention strategies.

Yet, several areas remain under-investigated and warrant further attention from researchers and clinicians alike. First, although existing psychological and pharmacological treatments hold promise, many youth do not respond completely necessitating investigation into augmentative treatment approaches and/or ways to improve existing interventions. Currently, much of our practice in these realms is based solely on clinical experience with little data directing clinical choices. Second, despite the sound evidence base of cognitive-behavioral therapy, this treatment modality is often being used as a second choice intervention, particularly in the

---

We thank the reviewers for their thoughtful critiques on manuscripts that appear in this series. Portions of this paper were supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health to Dr. Storch (NIMH 1R01MH078594-01 and L40 MH081950-02) and the Ramon and Cajal Programme RYC2005-93 under the Spanish Ministry of Higher Education (Spain) to the first author.

*Correspondence:* Luis J. García-López, Universidad de Jaén 23071 Jaén (España). E-mail: ljgarlo@cop.es Eric Storch, University of South Florida, 800 South 6th Street, 4th Floor, St. Petersburg, FL 33701 (USA). E-mail: estorch@health.usf.edu

United States. This issue is most alarming when one considers data that suggest that cognitive-behavioral treatment alone is superior to serotonergic medication alone in the treatment of pediatric OCD to take one example (see Keeley and Storch, next issue for a review). This example also seems to hold for other childhood anxiety disorders. In part, this may be explained by successful marketing by pharmaceutical companies, the tendency for families and practitioners to desire a "quick fix," and/or limited understanding about which treatments are most successful. However, part of the issue must be directed back at ourselves in that we have not done enough to spread the word about successful psychological interventions and providing attention to disseminating information about such treatments to others. Clinicians and researchers globally must connect to spread the word about effective interventions for our anxious youth. Lastly, although we have developed powerful interventions to help youth with anxiety, these interventions are often not tailored for individuals who do not fit in the 'mainstream' --- specifically, more attention is needed to adapt existing interventions so that they are culturally acceptable and appropriate for individuals of varying ethnicities.

Within this in mind, expanded discourse among researchers across the world is imperative to understanding the nature of childhood anxiety and the development of effective interventions. Some countries, to date, maintain strict adherence to best practice guidelines; others, unfortunately, acknowledge such guidelines but often fall short of their implementation due to a variety of reasons (e.g., differing theoretical beliefs among providers; pharmaceutical advertisements, etc.). To increase international collaborations, we sought to publish papers from leading international experts to stimulate new conversations among researchers and clinicians, and international efforts to collaborate in treating youth struggling with anxiety.

This special issue presents fourteen review and empirical papers covering the DSM childhood anxiety spectrum. Nine papers provide comprehensive literature reviews as well as highlight new treatment approaches to disorders such as separation anxiety disorder, school phobia, panic disorder with or without agoraphobia, specific phobia, social anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and substance-induced anxiety disorder. All of these papers follow a similar structure: introduction to the nature and characteristics of the particular disorder (prevalence, aetiology, comorbidity, differential diagnosis or course of disorder), assessment and evidence-based treatments (psychological and pharmacological), and finally, a section describing new challenges and innovations for each disorder. The remaining five papers do not focus on a particular condition, but rather highlight other issues relevant in the childhood anxiety field. Two manuscripts contain empirical data, one is a review of parental involvement in childhood anxiety and the remaining two serve to orient the reader to the state of the literature at the onset of the issue and close the issue with directions for future study. Given the large number of manuscripts, the special issue has been split into two sections; including the foreword and seven papers in the first issue and the remaining manuscripts in the second issue.

To this end, we are pleased that 45 international experts in childhood anxiety coming from 25 higher institutions located in countries such as Spain, USA, and Portugal have contributed manuscripts detailing a range of topics including the nature and treatment of specific childhood anxiety disorders and directions for future investigation. We believe that this will be a very useful way to communicate the direction in which the field is moving. What follows is a description of papers included in the first issue.

Ollendick and King open the series by orienting the reader to efforts to develop evidence-based mental health treatment. The article details the divide among mental health professionals in terms of orientations towards evidence-based treatment, and points the reader in the directions of areas that need to be further developed and improved. Second, Ehrenreich, Santucci, and Weiner discuss the phenomenology, assessment, and treatment of separation anxiety disorder, a disorder that is largely under-recognized and treated, yet associated with considerable functional and familial impairment. Third, Garcia-Fernandez, Inglés, Martínez-Monteaquedo and Redondo review the core characteristics of adolescents with school phobia, and emphasise the importance of differential diagnosis with other psychological problems such as separation anxiety disorder and truancy. This is an important issue given the elevated number of misclassified cases, resulting in poor treatment outcome. Fourth, Salvador, Matos, and Azevedo share current information on panic disorder in children and adolescents and highlight challenges and new psychological developments in clinical and research settings alike. Fifth, Orgiles, Espada and Mendez's paper not only covers the current status of assessment and treatments for specific phobias in children and adolescents but emphasizes the importance of carrying out studies to cover the gap in certain areas of intervention. This paper is particularly notable for revealing the main six areas that they view work on specific phobia as going in the next five years. On social anxiety disorder, García-López, Piqueras, Díaz-Castela and Inglés present a look ahead toward critical next steps in extending knowledge and improving the understanding of this disorder. Apart from revising the nature of social anxiety, the authors detail all the current debates within the literature and present a compilation of 12 new research lines from teams around the world on social anxiety that try to response to the current unanswered questions. Finally, Keeley and Storch review the nature and treatment of pediatric obsessive-compulsive disorder, a condition that has received considerable empirical attention among the anxiety disorders given its impairing nature to both the affected child and his/her family. A particular effort is made by the authors to provide information to readers on areas that warrant future research.