



Clarifying the prevalence of OCD: A response to reader comments

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ABSTRACT

This response to a reader's comment on our paper "The Global Assessment of OCD" addresses the critique regarding the stated prevalence of OCD as the fourth most common mental disorder. We acknowledge an oversight in our initial reference, discuss the variable prevalence rates from various studies, and highlight the significant disability caused by OCD. We have requested a correction to the original citation to reflect more recent findings, aiming to ensure accuracy in the discourse on OCD's public health impact.

Dear Professor Fineberg,

Thank you for your communication about an anonymous reader's comment with regards to the first sentence of our paper "The Global Assessment of OCD".

The reader suggested that the first sentence "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder has been cited as the 4th most common mental health disorder in various recent studies [1]" does not appear to be true, and that the referenced paper [1] does not state this.

The reader presented a valid question about the epidemiology of OCD, which provides us with an opportunity to expand on the complexities of estimating the high prevalence of OCD, which varies considerably across studies from different populations, regions and times [2–6].

The variable estimates of the prevalence of OCD have also been thought to reflect methodological issues, such as the heterogeneity of the diagnostic instruments utilised across different studies [7].

For instance, some of the early studies [8,9] used diagnostic instruments that were later criticised by researchers for being overly inclusive, potentially leading to an overestimation of OCD prevalence [3]. More recently, OCD has been reported to have a lifetime prevalence of 1–4% [10–13], and the 12-month estimated prevalence in Europe ranges from 0.1 to 2.3% [4]. A 2020 meta-analysis of 34 international studies

has found a pooled lifetime prevalence of OCD of 1.3% (95% CI: 1.1%–1.5%) and a pooled 12-month prevalence of 0.9% (95% CI: 0.7%–1.1%) [13].

Nevertheless, it is of note that OCD has recently been placed fifth after Common Mental Disorders NOS, depression, generalised anxiety disorder, and phobias and has been listed among the six most common mental health disorders in the UK [14,15].

Additionally, we wish to highlight that the World Health Organization identifies OCD as one of the top 10 conditions in terms of disability, resulting in lost income and diminished quality of life [16]. Moreover, within the Spanish population, OCD has been linked to a poorer quality of life compared to any other patient group, including those with physical health conditions, with the exception of schizophrenia [17].

Nevertheless, we acknowledge and regret that the cited reference was inaccurately applied, and we extend our gratitude to the anonymous reader for bringing this to our attention. Consequently, we have requested the journal to make the following corrections to the manuscript.

The sentence "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is the 4th most common mental disorder [1]" will be revised to "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder has been cited as the 4th most common mental health disorder [6]".

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In conclusion, although prevalence estimates have varied, and early studies may have overestimated its prevalence OCD remains one of the most common and burdensome mental health conditions globally and in the UK [13,15].

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Ilenia Pampaloni: Writing – original draft. **Lucy Morris:** Writing – review & editing. **Himanshu Tyagi:** Writing – review & editing. **Enrico Pessina:** Writing – review & editing. **Sabina Marriott:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. **Claire Fischer:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. **Heba Mohamed:** Writing – review & editing. **Anusha Govender:** Writing – review & editing. **Augusta Chandler:** Writing – review & editing. **Stefano Pallanti:** Writing – review & editing.

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