



[Erik Essen-Möller and the roots of multi-axial classification in psychiatry].

<https://arctichealth.org/en/permalink/ahliterature134760>

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Source: Fortschr Neurol Psychiatr. 2011 May;79(5):277-82

Date: May-2011

Language: German

Publication Type: Article

Keywords: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
History, 20th Century
Humans
Mental Disorders - classification - diagnosis - psychology
Neuropsychological Tests
Psychiatric Status Rating Scales - history
Psychiatry - history
Sweden
Syndrome

Abstract: Against the background of the preparation of ICD-11 and DSM-V, the historical roots of a multi-axial diagnostic assessment in psychiatry are reviewed. The principles of such an approach are traced back to the Swedish psychiatrist Erik Essen-Möller who had proposed a distinction between aetiological and descriptive aspects in the classification of mental disorders. Furthermore, he suggested to break down the descriptive classification into the cross-sectional psychopathological picture and the clinical course. Nowadays, a multi-axial assessment is used in diagnostic systems such as DSM-IV. However, these current concepts differ considerably from Essen-Möller's suggestions. A return to the original approach of multi-axial diagnostic assessment comprising the axes "syndromes", "course types" and "aetiology" would be in line with current neurobiological findings and may provide a bridge between the traditional categorical diagnostic approach and dimensional models.

PubMed ID: 21544760 [View in PubMed](#) 