

New guidance to help diagnose hoarding disorder

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Experts from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) have published new guidance to help doctors correctly diagnose hoarding disorder.

Hoarding disorder affects around 2% of the population but remains a largely misunderstood mental health condition. It was only added to the International Classification of Diseases in 2019, having previously been classified under Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Published in the *British Journal of General Practice*, the new guidance was written by Dr. Sharon Morein and Dr. Sanjiv Ahluwalia of Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) to help [health professionals](#) spot the signs of [hoarding disorder](#) and intervene.

Hoarding disorder involves clutter in the [home environment](#) taking over living spaces, as well as excessive acquisition and difficulty discarding possessions, and affects an individual's quality of life.

However, it typically comes to the fore only when patients seek support for other mental health or [physical conditions](#) and can then act as a barrier to treatment due to concerns about hygiene, safety, or access to the home.

People with [hoarding](#) disorder most commonly suffer from depression, while other comorbidities include Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Dr. Morein, an Associate Professor in Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and leader of the ARU Possessions and Hoarding Collective said, "Labels can be very useful in the health care system and can be the first stage for people receiving the support they need.

"It is really important that doctors and other frontline health care professionals are aware that hoarding disorder is a diagnosable medical condition and that it is usually linked to other issues so that proper support can be offered.

"Typically, hoarding disorder is something that sneaks up on people—it doesn't happen overnight—and people don't necessarily recognize they have a problem. One of the major difficulties with hoarding disorder is that sufferers often don't seek help themselves, and it only presents itself to [medical professionals](#) alongside other issues. The sooner the problem is spotted, the sooner support can be provided."

To help people understand more about hoarding disorder, the ARU Possessions and Hoarding Collective is hosting a [free conference](#) at ARU's Cambridge campus on Wednesday, 10 May.

The event, which will feature expert speakers including Professor Nick Neave of Northumbria University, will explain more about the disorder and the latest support strategies, and is aimed at service providers who help people with hoarding as part of their role, those affected by the hoarding behavior of others, as well as individuals who themselves are struggling with hoarding.

Dr. Morein added, "The ARU Possessions and Hoarding Collective is a group of academics and professionals aiming to improve our understanding of how people interact with their possessions.

"As part of our work, we research how hoarding can affect individuals and their families, as well as how service provision is currently delivered, and how it can be improved. We are inviting all these groups to attend the event in Cambridge on 10 May as we aim to increase awareness and ultimately provide better [support](#) for all."

More information: Sharon Morein-Zamir et al, Hoarding disorder: evidence and best practice in primary care, *British Journal of General Practice* (2023). [DOI: 10.3399/bjgp23X732513](https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp23X732513)

Provided by Anglia Ruskin University

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