INNP 2026 abstract: Psychiatric self-diagnosis and identity: Diagnosing the debate

Psychiatric self-diagnosis has become increasingly visible in contemporary society, reflecting the growing cultural circulation of psychiatric categories in both public discourse and online spaces. Despite growing public and professional attention, the concept remains poorly defined in the academic literature and its implications for identity and psychiatric practice remain underexplored. This paper presents a narrative review synthesizing philosophical and clinical debates on psychiatric self-diagnosis, with particular attention to identity function.

Drawing on literature from psychiatry, psychology and philosophy, the review identifies three identity-related themes: 1) identity development and experimentation, 2) self-understanding, and 3) belonging and collective claims-making. Critics argue that self-diagnosis risks misdiagnosis, self-pathologization, restrictive illness identities and tensions around diagnostic legitimacy and "diagnostic possessiveness". Conversely, proponents suggest that self-diagnosis can support self-understanding, empowerment, group belonging and resistance to epistemic injustice in psychiatry.

But the review also asks who is making these claims, and on what basis, and the answer changes how the debate should be read...