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Mood disorders in children and adolescents: where have we been and where are we going?

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Developmental disorders begin in childhood and may attenuate with age. Mood disorders, on the other hand, are generally considered "adult" disorders they begin by late childhood or early adolescence (Kim-Cohen et al., 2003) in over half the cases (Kim-Cohen et al., 2003). They are often not recognized as such, however. Much of the effort over the past 50 years has been in unmasking depression, separating the mood from comorbid disorders and ascertaining the degree to which the mood symptoms are primary, enduring and continuous with adult mood disorders. Insofar as the symptoms are impairing in youth, they are worthy of uncovering etiology and developing treatment regardless of whether they presage or are continuous with adult psychopathology, either homotypically or heterotypically.

This keynote address will review where the field has been and where we need to go with regard to phenomenology and treatment.