Impulsivity is a core symptom of a broad spectrum of psychiatric disorders including personality disorders, affective disorders, substance use disorders, conduct disorders, impulse control disorders, as well as suicidal and aggressive behavior with a substantial impact on both individuals and society. However, little work has been done to clarify the role of impulsivity in psychiatric disorders, and its response to treatment. Furthermore the current diagnostic criteria (ICED-10, DSM-IV) do not differentiate impulsive from non impulsive individuals within diagnostic groups. There are different approaches regarding the definition, assessment, and management of impulsivity. Further research of biological, psychopathological and social parameters is expected to improve our knowledge regarding the relationship between impulsivity and mental illness.

**Key words:** impulsivity, mental disorders, suicidal behavior, aggression, comorbidity, rating scales.