



# Factitious Illness and Malingering

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# Factitious Disorders: Definition

- Not real, genuine, or natural
- Characterized by:
  - Physical or psychological symptoms that are produced by the individual and are under voluntary control
- Behavior:
  - Acts have a compulsive quality

# Diagnostic Categories

- Factitious disorder with psychological symptoms
- Chronic factitious disorder with physical symptoms (Munchausen's syndrome)
- Atypical factitious disorder with physical symptoms

# Factitious Disorder with Psychological Symptoms: Criteria

- Psychological symptoms are apparently under the individual's voluntary control
- Symptoms are not explained by any other mental disorder
  - but may be superimposed on one
- The goal is to assume the “patient role”
  - it is not otherwise understandable in light of the environmental circumstances (e.g., malingering)

# Factitious Disorder with Psychological Symptoms: Features

- Pan-symptomatic complex of psychological symptoms
  - worse when observed
- Claims of memory loss, hallucinations, dissociation, or suicidal ideation
- Suggestibility to addition of symptoms
- Provision of approximate answers
- Strong linkage with personality disorders and substance abuse

# Factitious Disorder with Psychological Symptoms: Differential Diagnosis

- Dementia
- Psychosis
- Brief reactive psychosis
- Schizophreniform disorder
- Malingering

# Chronic Factitious Disorder with Physical Symptoms

- Munchausen's syndrome
  - First described by Asher in 1951 (Lancet)
  - Dedicated to Baron von Munchausen
- Alternative labels
  - Hospital hoboos
  - Hospital addicts
  - Malingerers
  - Kopenickades
  - Sufferers of Ahasuerus syndrome



# Munchausen's Syndrome: Characteristic Features

- Laparotomophilia migrans
- Hemmoraghia histrionica
- Neurologica diabolica
- Dermatitis autogenica
- Hyperpyrexia figmentatica

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Useful Pointers

- Multiplicity of scars
- Truculence and evasiveness
- Acute, but not entirely convincing, history
- Wallet with hospital cards
- Time of presentation that predicts care by less experienced staff

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Possible Motives (per Asher)

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- Desire to be the center of attention
- Grudge against doctors and hospitals
- Desire for drugs
- Desire to escape from the police
- Desire for free room and board

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Differential Diagnosis

- True physical disorder
- Somatoform disorder
- Hysteria
- Malingering
- Schizophrenia
- Personality disorder
  - Antisocial or borderline

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Dynamics...A Need to Explain...

- Posing and pseudologia fantastica
- Medical arena for presentation
  - Physicians often central figures in childhood
  - Often works in medical profession
- Rootless wandering
  - Search for lost primary love object
- Masochistic self-injury
  - Identification with the aggressor
  - Mastery over early trauma

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Hospital Course

- Dramatic presentation
- Physicians mobilized
- Demands for attention
- Ambivalence manifest
- Hoax is discovered
- Anger erupts
- Discharge AMA without psychiatric consultation

# Munchausen's Syndrome: The MGH Experience

- General description
  - A lightning rod effect for similar cases
- Case examples
  - Gas gangrene
  - Insulinoma
  - Pheochromocytoma
  - Brain abscess

# Munchausen's Syndrome: Treatment

- Universal remedy
  - Till Eulenspiegel (1515)
- Create a rogues gallery
- Invite participation as pseudodoctors
- Apply psychotherapeutic principles
  - Be aware of countertransference
- Encourage psychiatric consultation
  - Attempt to prevent further harm



# Munchausen's Syndrome: Diagnostic Criteria

- Plausible presentation of physical symptoms
  - Under the individual's voluntary control
  - Leading to multiple hospitalizations
- The individual's goal is to assume the patient role
  - Not a manifestation of malingering

# Moving forward: Conclusion

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- Be prepared:
  - To make the diagnosis
  - To identify and manage countertransference reactions
  - To prevent further harm to the patient

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# Thank you..

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- Questions?
- Comments?