

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): A Comprehensive Review

Introduction

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts and ritualistic behaviors. It is a relatively common disorder that affects approximately 2.2% of adults in the United States (Kessler et al., 2005). OCD is a chronic and disabling condition that can lead to significant distress and impairment in functioning if left untreated (Stewart et al., 2003). The purpose of this review is to provide an overview of OCD, including its causes, symptoms, assessment, and treatment.

Symptoms

Individuals with OCD typically experience both obsessions and compulsions. Obsessions are persistent, intrusive thoughts that cause distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Common obsessions include fear of contamination, fear of making mistakes, and intrusive sexual thoughts. Compulsions are repetitive behaviors that individuals with OCD feel compelled to perform in order to reduce the distress caused by the obsessions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Common compulsions include hand-washing, checking, and counting.

Causes

The exact cause of OCD is unknown, although research suggests that it is likely caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors (McAllister-Williams et al., 2004). Biological factors include genetic factors, as well as abnormalities in brain chemistry and structure. Psychological factors include cognitive biases and maladaptive coping strategies. Environmental factors include stressful life events, such as trauma and abuse.

Assessment

The diagnosis of OCD is based on a clinical interview and the administration of standardized measures, such as the Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale (Y-BOCS) (Goodman et al., 1989). The Y-BOCS is a 10-item scale that assesses the severity of obsessions and compulsions. It is widely used to monitor treatment progress.

Treatment

The primary treatment for OCD is cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is an evidence-based psychotherapy that helps individuals to identify and modify maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors (Stewart et al., 2003). It typically involves exposure and response prevention, in which individuals are gradually exposed to their obsessions and compulsions and taught to resist their urge to perform the compulsive behavior. In addition to CBT, medications such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) may be used to reduce OCD symptoms (McAllister-Williams et al., 2004).

Conclusion

In conclusion, OCD is a chronic and disabling condition that can lead to significant distress and impairment in functioning if left untreated. It is characterized by persistent, intrusive thoughts and ritualistic behaviors. The exact cause is unknown, although research suggests that it is likely caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors. The diagnosis of OCD is based on a clinical interview and the administration of standardized measures, such as the Y-BOCS. The primary treatment is CBT, which typically involves exposure and response prevention. In addition, medications such as SSRIs may be used to reduce OCD symptoms.

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