Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD is a chronic disorder that waxes and wanes over time. Symptoms may intensify spontaneously without any reason and at times it can become a very disabling illness. Onset is usually in childhood, as early as ten years of age. However it often does not come to diagnosis because people with OCD hide their symptoms from their families due to shame or guilt. This disorder occurs equally in males and females.

The criteria for diagnosis have been listed below.

Obsessions

- Recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are experienced as intrusive and inappropriate which cause marked anxiety or feelings of distress.
- The thoughts, impulses, or images are not simply excessive worries about real life problems.
- The person attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, impulses, or images or to neutralize them with some other thought or action.
- The person recognizes that the obsessive thoughts, impulses, or images are a product of his or her own mind.

Examples of Obsessive Behaviors include the following:
  - Fear of contamination or being infected by germs.
  - Keeping yourself safe or your family.
  - Doubting one’s memory or judgment.
  - Being right or good.
  - Sexual thoughts.
  - Aggressive thoughts.

Compulsions

- Repetitive behaviors or mental acts that the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession, or according to rules that must be applied rigidly.
- The behaviors or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing some dreaded event or situation, however these behaviors or mental acts either are not connected in a realistic way with what they are designed to neutralize or prevent or are clearly excessive.

Some examples of Compulsive Behaviors include the following:

  Repetitive Behaviors
  - Hand washing
  - Cleaning
- Ordering objects or things by ABC order, numbers, colors
- Checking locks, the stove, iron, safety of the children
- Repeating actions a certain number of times until you feel it is right
- Touching or tapping objects
- Hoarding

**Mental Acts**
- Counting stairs, squares or sidewalks or steps
- Confessing and seeking reassurance
- Praying
- Repeating words silently

It is important to note that there is a common association of ADHD, Tic Disorders and OCD in children. It is reported that 30% of children with OCD will have an associated Tic problem. At times it can be difficult to determine which is a complex tic, and which is a compulsion. Other mental health problems also occur with children who have OCD. 25% will have depression, 24% will have a development disability like Autism, 10% will have ADHD and 10% will have ODD.

**Treatment of OCD**
The treatment of OCD includes behavior therapy and medications, however in children the first line of treatment is therapy. Therapy is very effective and only in severe cases should medications be used. The medicines used are generally the SSRI’s which are commonly known as the antidepressants. These medicines are very effective in treating anxiety disorders including OCD. Luvox may have more specific use in OCD but the other SSRI’s (Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Celexa and Lexapro) are known to help.

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