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OVER AWARENESS LEADS TO HYPOCHONDRIASIS IN THE PRESENT SCENARIO



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ABSTRACT

Internet and media has made mankind avail any information with just one click. This one click might lead to hypochondriasis. Hypochondriasis is referred to, as having a worry of serious mental illness without underlying biological cause. Over awareness about health and diseases has affected the literate more than the illiterate as it is said "ignorance is bliss" this bliss for illiterate has turned into a curse for literate. Being aware is not wrong but being aware in the right perspective is what this paper is all about. If by being aware was more than enough then that means we need no expert or physician. The available information is only to make us aware of situation not to master from it. By this paper author wants to open a new vision to information available to use. The cause and treatment to these diseases have been explained in detail and it has also opened a new area of research.

KEYWORDS: Hypochondriasis, Present Scenario, ignorance is bliss.

INTRODUCTION--

Awareness increases knowledge, understanding, thinking ability, cause effect relationship but excess of everything creates an imbalance. Awareness about disease, symptoms, health care measures, bulletins are so dearly shown by media, newspaper article. It provides with all amount of information but fails to make the audience understand, the aspect that plays an important role behind the stage in the occurrence of certain disease or syndrome. Thus, sometime this half-explained awareness leads to **hypochondriasis**

HYPOCHONDRIASIS:-

Hypochondriasis is referred to as having worry of serious mental illness without underlying medical cause. It has been derived from the Greek term "hypokhondriases"

DSM-IV- TR Hypochondriasis as "thorough medical evaluation doesn't identify a general medical condition that fully accounts for the person's concern about diseases or for the physical sign or symptoms"

DSM-IV replaced the diagnosis of **hypochondriasis** with the diagnosis of somato symptom disorder and illness anxiety disorder.

ICD- 10 diagnosis of **hypochondriasis** has negative effects on quality of life, social and occupational functioning. "illness often becomes a central part of a hypochondriac's identity" (Arthur Barsky,1988) According to Fallon, hypochondriasis spend huge amount of money in unnecessary medical and treatment **Family study**

Family study have shown lack of genetic influence in **hypochondriasis** (Noyes.et.al, 1997). Thus the studies clearly stated that environment plays important factor in it, so awareness has a huge impact on increasing rate of **hypochondriasis**.

PREVALENCE:

Prevalence rate has increased over the past few years as well as the use of internet and media influence. 4.2% - 6.3% in DSM-III-R hypochondriasis (Barsky, 1990) which was increased to 4.7 – 11.2% in DSM-IV (Seivewright et. al, 2004). Hypochondriasis has a lifetime prevalence and appears to be equally common in males and females DSM-IV-TR (2000).

ONSET:

Hypochondriasis may begin anytime from young adulthood. The peak age of onset is in the 20s and 30s.

CLINICAL FEATURES:

Clinical picture of patient with hypochondriasis, who come to physician with certain serious diseases like a cough has appeared, it is a sure sign of Tuberculosis, a discomfort in chest, the patient is convinced that a heart attack is occurring. Minor symptoms to support their argument. A muscle ache or perhaps an accidental bruise indicates the dreaded diagnosis. Their concerns persist despite the reassurances of their physicians. (MacLeod et. al, 1998). "Doctor shopping" is predictable common in patients with hypochondriasis until they find someone who is willing to listen to their tales with sympathetic attitude. (Lipsitt, 1997). One study (**Hadjistavropoulos** et. al, 1998) found that individuals who are prone to hypochondriasis usually seek additional information about the results of medical tests, "regardless of the diagnostic feedback they received". They are preoccupied with the illness and may become bed bound not by their symptoms but by their fear of having disabling illness. They are often found solving online tests of some or the other disease on different sites and are convinced of their illness or the patient might quit work, refuse to travel or make unreasonable demand or may drive away from friends and family.

COMORBIDITY:

Hypochondriasis is often accompanied by other psychological disorders. Bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder depression, phobia, generalised anxiety disorder and somatization

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disorder are the most common in people with hypochondriasis.

DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS:

Hypochondriasis is differential diagnosis, Briquet's syndrome, conversion, body dysmorphic disorder, malingering and factitious illness, histrionic personality disorder.

ETIOLOGY:

There are many factors leading to Hypochondriasis. The media, internet, articles, TV shows have contributed to hypochondria. Out breaks or predicted pandemics, statistics regarding certain illness such as cancer can give rise to hypochondriacs illusion that they are more likely to develop these diseases. Other factors like serious illness, death in the family and overly protective caregiver who excessively focused on minor health concerns may be implicated as a potential cause of hypochondriasis development.

Internet has made hypochondriac much easier than it used to be. The easy availability of information help people but at the same time it can be disastrous for people who are likely to worry. "For hypochondriacs, the internet has absolutely changed things for the worse" (Fallon, 1996, Phantom illness: Recognizing, Understanding and overcoming Hypochondriasis.)

Study by Pew Research Center found that one third of American say they have gone online specifically to diagnose a medical condition.

Microsoft research also gave a survey about online medical research to more than 500 of the company's employee and found that 70% repeated search of the more serious illness with minor symptoms.

Thomas Fergus of Baylor, Psychologist in the University in Waco, Texas conducted a survey on 512 people and found 454 people reported anxiety and frequently visiting online.

Hypochondriacs view medical related television shows, health bulletin boards and forums as informative source when in reality the information may not be scientific the **situation** of yours may differ from the **situation** shown by the media. Therefore people are sometime mislead by the information provided. "They don't have a lot of scientific validity (Barsky et.al, 1998)

TREATMENT:

It is found that cognitive behavioral therapy is an effective treatment for hypochondriacs. A small amount of evidence suggests that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors can also reduce symptoms. Benzodiazepine are often prescribed to hypochondriacs.

CONCLUSION:

Anything if consumed in excess causes harm so does awareness. Thus educated people should not only act sensible but also practical before accessing the available information. Any information should not be grasped as it is presented but the validity and reliability of information should be verified. Every condition has thousand more factors which are unfolded by mankind so we should have a positive attitude, discard the pessimistic view for future and lead a happy content life. This behavior of ours will not only prevent from hypochondriasis but from any other associated problem.

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