

Obsessive compulsive disorder and personality disorders among first degree relatives of obsessive compulsive disorder patients

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Current Psychiatry. Ain Shams University (Print)

2008 v15 n2

The causes of obsessive-compulsive disorder are as yet unknown. Evidence of familial aggregation is one approach for investigating the role of genetics in the etiology of this condition.

Studies of the familiarity of obsessive-compulsive disorder have yielded inconsistent results. The current study compared the familial aggregation of obsessive-compulsive disorder in first-degree relatives of outpatients with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Fifty case probands and 129 of their first degree relatives were identified outpatient psychiatric clinic and 30 control persons were identified. These probands, their first-degree relatives and the control groups were evaluated by psychiatrists using a semi-structured interview. DSM-IV-TR criteria were used for final diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder and personality disorders.

Normal personality dimensions were evaluated using Eysneck Personality Questionnaire Revised Saudi Form.

Severity of illness and symptoms profile were assessed using Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale and checklist. The prevalence of obsessive-compulsive disorder was substantially higher in first degree relatives than control persons (22.48% vs. 3.3%). Obsessive-Compulsive disorder patients had higher rates of both obsessions and compulsions ; however, this finding is more for obsessions. Probands and relatives groups had a higher prevalence than control group of any cluster C personality disorder in general and obsessive compulsive personality disorder and avoidant personality disorder in particular.

Neuroticism was significantly higher than other normal personality dimensions among all obsessive-compulsive disorder patients from all groups. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a familial disorder. The results confirm the previous data on the familiarity of obsessive-compulsive disorder. The finding of a higher familial aggregation of obsessive-compulsive disorder in first degree relatives of obsessive-compulsive disorder probands than the control group strongly supports the impact of familial-genetic factors in obsessive-compulsive disorder. Neuroticism, obsessive compulsive personality disorder and obsessive-compulsive disorder may be alternative expressions of the same underlying vulnerability that may represent different levels of severity along a continuum.