

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder with Porn Addiction during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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CLINICAL HISTORY:

Mr K, 21-year-old gentleman, unmarried male, pursuing his degree, coming from a nuclear family belonging to middle socio-economic status, second child to his parents from a non-consanguineous marriage, developed fear of getting COVID-19 even without symptoms. He stopped going out and instructed his family members to do the same unless it was an emergency, along with strictly adhering to precautionary measures like sanitising his hands for five minutes every half an hour, washing his hands, checking oxygen saturation levels at least three times a day and constantly looking out for symptoms like coughing and fever. He got himself tested for COVID-19 four times and the report came out to be negative in all instances. His mother reported that this fear decreased after he got the second dose of the vaccine but he was still apprehensive about COVID-19. He spent four to five hours every day on his phone and television looking at the news and this would increase his fear. Since June 2021, he began to spend excessive time on his phone during the lockdown when his college was closed, watching porn around 4 to 5 days a week, sometimes up to four hours at a stretch and would end up masturbating most times even though he tried to control himself. After 8 to 9 months of watching pornography, he would start by watching heterosexual porn but later would switch to porn involving animals, mostly dogs, and humans. He also thought of trying it but failed. He felt watching porn would satisfy his compulsions. He began to feel weak after masturbating and would waste the majority of his time due to this. He felt guilty and disgusted about it later. Few days before presenting to the hospital, he pictured himself having sexual intercourse with a small dog and this disturbed him a lot and caused him sleep disturbances. The patient reported that he would get angry when being asked to do household chores or studies by his parents.

He felt guilty, sad, sleepless and irritable because of his repetitive thoughts and actions and began losing interest in things he earlier used to like doing. The patient was started on SSRI Sertraline 50mg and optimised to 200mg per day along with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

INVESTIGATION

Mental Status Examination

Mental Status Examination showed thought content that was preoccupied COVID-19 infection & distress associated with porn watching.

Yale Brown Obsessive Compulsive Symptoms check list was obtained, indicating moderate severity

HAM-A: A score of 24 was obtained, indicating moderate Depression

FINAL DIAGNOSIS:

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder with Porn Addiction during the COVID-19 Pandemic

DISCUSSION:

COVID-19 Pandemic is an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that has affected the mental health of individuals immensely. Many mental health conditions worsened and many vulnerable individuals developed mental illnesses. OCD was among the conditions that emerged with the new norm that is associated with repeated hand wash, social distancing and testing to confirm COVID-19. There are few case reports which have explored the onset of OCD and other behaviour disorders among young individuals who were restricted to their homes.

Originating as a cluster of unexplained cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China, novel coronavirus disease – officially designated as COVID-19 by the World Health Organization – has reached the level of a pandemic, affecting countries all across the world. [1]

The Global Burden of Disease 2020 estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a 27.6% increase in cases of major depressive disorder (MDD) and a 25.6% increase in cases of anxiety disorders (AD) worldwide in 2020. The greatest increases in MDD and AD were found in places highly affected by COVID-19, as indicated by decreased human mobility and daily COVID-19 infection rates. Females were more affected than males, and younger people, especially those aged 20–24 years, were more affected than older adults. [2]

Correlating with our case, the age of patient who is aged 21 years.

In the general population, Robinson et al., reported a small but statistically significant overall increase in mental health symptoms during March-April 2020 compared with pre-pandemic measures. [3]

Kunzler et al. also found a moderate symptom increase in the general population for depression and a small but significant increase in symptoms of anxiety. [4] OCD, an anxiety disorder, was in forefront among many individuals as presented in this case report.

According to an online survey of people suffering from OCD by Jelinek, Lena et al., 72 % of the participants reported an increase in OCD. The worsening of symptoms was primarily associated with reduced mobility and interpersonal conflicts. [5]

Nissen et al. (2020) found that there was a significant positive correlation between total OCD severity scores and the occurrence of OCD aggressive and sexual symptoms. [6]

The COVID-19 lockdown translated into physical isolation, driving individuals to waste time online with no definite purpose, spending longer, abnormal durations of time online when bored, leading to increased consumption of online pornography. In 2019, Pornhub[©], one of the world's largest pornographic video-sharing websites, received 42 billion visits—roughly 5 times the world's population. [7] A study employing Google Trends and joint point regression analysis demonstrated a significant rise (compared to last 4 years) in interest for pornographic websites in countries with “stay at home orders”. [8]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, increased stress factors affected people’s motivations to engage in potentially addictive behaviours. Since March 2020, during the lockdown period, Pornhub has seen a worldwide increase in pornography use of 11.6% compared to the previous average days. [9]

The best possible treatment is combination of pharmacological and non-pharmacological approach. SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor) along with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy have shown positive changes in the affected individuals.

In a post-COVID world, there is potential for many mental health conditions presenting in a complex manner as presented in this case and more research is required in this area.

CONCLUSION:

OCD and Porn Addiction have emerged as major concern in COVID-19 pandemic related mental health disorders and youngsters should be screened for these conditions and appropriate treatment strategies should be devised in community care.

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