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Independent Study and Mentorship 3B

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Research Assessment #5 - Conversion Disorders

Topic: Conversion Disorders

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Citations:

"Conversion disorder." CareNotes, Truven Health Analytics, 2017. Health & Wellness Resource Center,


Assessment:
This week, I decided to focus my research on conversion disorders. The basics behind conversion disorders were covered in my psychology class last year, and I was fascinated to learn that the mind can cause physical injury and medical conditions. In class, the lesson on conversion disorders was very brief, so I wanted to gain more knowledge about conversion disorders. What truly causes conversion disorders? Are some people more at risk than others?

The first article I read, “Conversion disorder”, gave a general description of what conversion disorders were, the most common symptoms, and the most common treatments for patients with conversion disorders. This article was interesting to me because it cleared up the confusion I had about how to tell the difference between a true medical condition and a conversion disorder. Although the symptoms of a conversion disorder are real, there are tests that medical professionals can run in order to diagnose the patient of a medical condition or injury. If no medical condition is found, then the patient will often be referred to a mental health professional. However, this caused me to wonder what tests are used when checking patients for a medical condition.

The second article I read was called “Somatoform disorders”. Somatoform disorders can be defined as disorders “characterized by physical complaints that appear to be medical in origin but that cannot be explained in terms of a physical disease, the results of substance abuse, or by another mental disorder” (Frey). Conversion disorders fall under this classification, as the physical symptoms of a conversion disorder have no known medical cause. I decided to read about the broad category of somatoform disorders in order to gain more information about disorders that are similar to conversion disorders. Some of these disorders include: Somatization disorder (Briquet’s syndrome), hypochondriasis, and pain disorder. After reading these
descriptions, I realized that the characteristics of each disorder were very similar. It would be difficult to diagnose a patient based on broad information. These aspects of a job in the medical field can be tricky, which is why I must attend medical school to ensure that I am prepared for scenarios similar to this.

The second article also went into more detail about conversion disorders. I had previously been confused about why your body reacted to severely to stressful situations. However, the article stated that the physical symptoms are designed to contain the anxiety of the patient and remove the patient from the threatening situation. The article gave a great example of a student that loses the ability to use their voice if they are afraid to speak. In a way, this makes sense because if the student cannot speak, they do not have to follow through with public speaking, thus removing the student from the stressful situation. The article also answered some previous questions that I had regarding the demographics of this disorder. According the the article, age and genetics are not factors in experiencing a conversion disorder. The article also states that the ratio of female-to-male patients is between 2:1 and 5:1. This piqued my curiosity. I wonder what causes women to be more at risk for a conversion disorder. Another interesting fact that shocked me was that up to 34% of the world’s population experiences conversion symptoms in their lifetime. This was very surprising to me because conversion disorders are so unknown for such a large population of patients. While reading, I was happy to learn that the majority of patients (90%) recover from conversion symptoms within a month and that most patients do not experience a recurrence of symptoms.

I found the articles this week to be especially interesting. As an aspiring psychiatrist, I am fascinated by the extreme and mysterious mental conditions. I was glad for this opportunity to
research conversion disorders and gain more information than I had originally received in a psychology classroom. Next week, I hope to continue to focus my research on specific disorders and conditions in order to get the most out of my research.
Annotations:

http://scrible.com/s/gzJS4

http://scrible.com/s/mEU2m