

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Introduction

The topic that I chose to write my fact sheet on is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). A person with this disorder has an obsession with a particular topic or action and will compulsively perform rituals to relieve the anxiety and fear that these objects or topics cause the individual. An example of a person who has OCD is somebody who has an obsession with keeping their bodies free from germs. This person will compulsively wash his/her hands even when they do not need to be cleaned. This individual will avoid touching objects that may be covered with germs such as door knobs, using public bathrooms, and shaking hands with others. This obsession consumes the individual's life and interferes with relationships, school, and work.

I chose this topic because I used to have OCD when I was younger. My fear was of becoming sick. I would perform rituals that I thought would keep me healthy even though realistically, they would not. One of my best friends currently struggles with this disorder. She goes to art school and will constantly re-do projects that she has completed successfully because she feels that it was not done correctly. She also has an obsession with numbers. In order for her to feel comfortable certain actions need to be repeated fourteen times. Many people who suffer from OCD will perform an act over and over a certain number of times before once again feeling comfortable with his/her surroundings. I am interested in learning more about this disorder to analyze my experience with it and to perhaps learn some ways that I may be able to help my friend through this difficult time.

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- **Web site #1 Name:** Mental Health and Mental Disorders
- **Web address:**
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/HTML/tracking/od18.htm#mentalhealthstat>
- **Background Information:**
 - Healthy People 2010 is working towards increasing the number of adults in the workforce with a mental health problem. OCD is considered a mental health problem because the behaviors that someone with this disorder suffers from, originate in the mind. This action by Healthy People 2010 is based on the National Health Interview Survey from 1994. It will be targeted for those who are eighteen years and older who have a serious mental illness or for those who have used prescription medicines for a mental disorder within the last year. The symptoms of their disorder must significantly interfere with their everyday life. This will work with civilians who are not institutionalized. Some of the questions that will be asked of these who fall under this category include: Was he/she employed in the past year? And, in the last year did he/she have a certain mental illness? One of which is OCD.
- **Web site #2 Name:** Mental Health and Mental Disorders

- **Web address:**
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/document/HTML/tracking/od18.htm#mentalhealthstat>
- **Background Information:**
 - Another goal of Healthy People 2010 is to increase the number of adults with mental disorders who receive treatment. This is based on the National Comorbidity Survey of 1991. It is directed towards civilians who are not institutionalized and are between the ages of eighteen and fifty-four. Those who fall into this category must also have received help from a mental health professional in the past. Those who are included in this segment include those who suffer from the following: schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, manic depressive disorder, autism, major depression, panic disorder, nonaffective psychosis, mania, and obsessive compulsive disorder.
- **Web site #3 Name:** National Institute of Mental Health
- **Web address:** <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/anxiety-disorders/role-of-research-in-improving-the-understanding-and-treatment-of-anxiety-disorders.shtml>
- **Background Information:**
 - NIMH is currently studying the role genes play in the presence of anxiety disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorders and how these studies can improve treatment. New information has shown that not only does environment play a key role in the prevalence of these illnesses, but genes do as well. Two areas of the brain, the amygdala and the hippocampus, are key in the production and regulation of fears and anxieties. The amygdala interprets sensory images and alerts the central brain when there are dangers present. Emotional memories are also stored here that can lead to specific fears. The hippocampus plays a role in flashbacks and problems with specific memories. Those who were subject to abuse as a child appear to have smaller hippocampuses. Further studies will look at the reasons why this happens. With further studies, researchers can discover new ways to perhaps better treat these anxiety disorders like OCD.

Section 2: Research

Web site #1 Name: Archives of General Psychiatry: “White Matter Abnormalities in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder”

- **Web address:** <http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/62/7/782>
- **Summary of the research:**
 - A study was conducted in 2005 testing the white matter structure in the brains of people who suffer from OCD. The study involved fifteen patients with the disorder and fifteen participants without the disorder as a control group. The control group paralleled age, ethnicity, and gender in the patient group. The hypothesis was that those with OCD had abnormal white matter structure. When the study ended, researchers found that, in fact, those with OCD had significantly lower FA, a measure of water self-diffusion, in the white matter of the brain when compared to those without the disorder. Therefore, the

individuals with OCD had white matter structure abnormalities when compared to healthy patients. This study's results were consistent with other studies' findings. The study focused on the anterior cingulated gyrus part of the brain. However, the findings can be applied to the entire brain as well.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Archives of General Psychiatry: "Genetic and Environmental Contributions to the Child Behavior Checklist Obsessive-Compulsive Scale"
- **Web address:** <http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/61/6/608>
- **Summary of the research:**
 - A twin study was done in 2004 that tested how much the environment and genes affect the prevalence of OCD. In this study, there were 4,246 seven year old twin pairs, 2,841 ten year old pairs, 1,562 twelve year old pairs, and 1,461 mixed age pairs with the average age of nine years old. The researchers used the Child Behavior Checklist in the DSM-IV in order to identify children with the disorder. This study showed that OCD is influenced by a person's genes 55% of the time while environmental factors cause OCD 45% of the time. The study did not find that gender played a role in the prevalence of OCD at these ages.
- **Web site #3 Name:** Archives of General Psychiatry: "Frontal-Striatal Dysfunction During Planning in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder"
- **Web address:** <http://archpsyc.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/62/3/301?maxtoshow=&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=obsessive+compulsive+disorder&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=10&resourcetype=HWCIT>
- **Summary of the research:**
 - A study conducted in 2005 tested the function of the brain called the frontal-striatal. The hypothesis was that the dysfunction of this part of the brain causes impairments in planning for those with OCD. The study included twenty-two patients with no medication who had the disorder along with twenty-two people without OCD. The results showed that those with OCD did, in fact, have planning impairments taking place in the frontal-striatal part of the brain. When participants were asked to plan something, OCD patients' frontal-striatal was less responsive than those of the healthy participants. Simultaneously, while the frontal-striatal was slightly responding, the anterior cingulated, responsible for short-term memory, was stronger in patients with OCD. This is most likely to compensate for the decreased responsiveness of the frontal-striatal.

Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name:** OCDCenter.org
- **Web address:** <http://www.ocdcenter.org/about-ocd/ocd-statistics.php>
- **Summary of the statistics:**

- In the year 1990, approximately \$8.4 billion were spent in the treatment of OCD. This is about 6% of the \$147.8 billion spent on all mental illnesses during that year. Because there are so many mental illnesses that people can have, the fact that OCD used 6% of the money spent for the treatment of these illnesses, is astounding. Mental illnesses such as those caused by alcohol and drugs most likely account for a very high percentage of the cost for treatment of illness. However, because OCD used 6% of the total money spent on treatment of all mental problems, it shows that this disorder is a very important public health issue that is costing people a tremendous amount of money.
- **Web site #2 Name:** The Ohio State University Medical Center
- **Web address:**
http://medicalcenter.osu.edu/patientcare/healthcare_services/mental_health/mental_health_about/obsessive_compulsive_disorder/Pages/index.aspx
- **Summary of the statistics:**
 - According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 2.2 million Americans have OCD in any given year. About 300 million people live in America. Approximately 1 million people currently live in the state of Rhode Island. To put this statistic into perspective, 2.2 million people in the United States suffering from OCD is equivalent to more than the population of two states of Rhode Island put together. Because OCD is under-diagnosed, there are most likely more than 2.2 million people battling it. This is a serious public health issue that needs to continue to be addressed properly. Non-profit organizations should be utilized and further advertised so that people with this disorder can find support and helpful resources.
- **Web site #3 Name:** NYU Child Study Center
- **Web address:**
http://www.aboutourkids.org/families/disorders_treatments/az_disorder_guide/obsessive_compulsive_disorder/children_risk
- **Summary of the statistics:**
 - Approximately 20% of children with OCD have a family member who also has this disorder. This statistic shows that OCD can be caused by something genetic. Therefore, this should push researchers to further investigate the roles genes and heredity play in the development of OCD. Also, the environment that the child lives in needs to be explored by researchers to see whether a certain type of home or school life is associated with the onset of OCD. The concept of nature vs. nurture should be considered to determine what type of treatment should be used. If the child's OCD is thought to be brought on by a poor home life, psychotherapy and family therapy should be the main use of treatment. However, if the child has a genetic predisposition to having OCD, perhaps medications can be used to correct these differences.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name:** MayoClinic.com
- **Web address:** <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hoarding/DS00966>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - One symptom of OCD is compulsive hoarding syndrome. This is characterized by the collection of items and the inability to throw objects away because of supposed meaning. In many cases, homes will be filled with so many items that residents can barely walk through their homes. Such living conditions cause unsanitary places to live, especially when the person hoards animals. Those who hoard rarely have other OCD symptoms. Because of this researchers are trying to make hoarding its own mental illness and not just a symptom of OCD. Because many people who hoard don't even realize that they have a problem, many individuals who fall into this category rarely get treatment. However, it is people like this that may need treatment more than any OCD patient because of the unsanitary conditions it can create.

- **Web site #2 Name:** National Institute of Mental Health
- **Web address:** <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/when-unwanted-thoughts-take-over-obsessive-compulsive-disorder/index.shtml#pub4>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - OCD usually begins in childhood and is diagnosed before the age of twenty. Treatment involves psychotherapy and medication. Those with OCD can speak with a psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, or a social worker. Anti-depressants and anti-anxiety pills may be given to help those who suffer from this disorder. Pills may allow the patient to be less anxious or fearful when a ritual is not performed or a situation arises that makes him/her uncomfortable. Although some people avoid using pills for treatment, others believe that medication works better than psychotherapy. Because OCD usually begins in childhood, early intervention is very important. It would be best for this public health issue to be caught at a young age so that treatment can be implemented quickly to help the sufferer from becoming worse.

- **Web site #3 Name:** FamilyDoctor.org
- **Web address:** <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/mentalhealth/anxiety/133.htm>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - Obsessions are thoughts that run through a person's mind. Compulsions are the actions that people do to ease the anxiety these thoughts cause the individual to have. Common obsessions for those who suffer from OCD include: fear of germs, the need for perfection, obsessing over numbers, and fear of harming loved ones. Compulsions that are common for those with OCD include: cleaning, opening and closed things, locking and unlocking windows and doors, rearranging items, counting, saving objects, and having the need for approval. Understanding the signs and symptoms of OCD are very important. Many people brush these signs off as a quirk. However, by learning more

about his disorder, people can begin to see that they may have a problem that deserves medical attention.

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name:** NAMI
- **Web address:** http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Inform_Yourself/About_NAMI/About_NAMI.htm
- **Summary of the information:**
 - The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) was founded in 1979. It is an advocacy organization that provides information and support for those who suffer from mental illnesses and their families. It focuses on educating everyone about the prevalence of mental illness in the United States and pushes for improvements in treatment. They have state and national conferences as well as an annual convention. Anyone can become a NAMI member to help advocate for people with mental illnesses. Volunteers are welcome to join to work with the cause as well. All members are able to vote at NAMI elections, receive an Advocate NAMI magazine subscription, receive the top information about mental illness, and receive discounts on NAMI brochures, videos, and promotional items. By increasing awareness of this disorder, those who suffer from it will be more likely to get treatment and know that they have support from advocates and others who also have the disorder.

- **Web site #2 Name:** International OCD Foundation
- **Web address:** <http://www.ocfoundation.org/>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - The International OCD Foundation was founded in 1986 by a group of people suffering from this disorder and similar disorders along with friends and family members. It is a non-profit organization which strives to educate those with the disorder as well as people who are interested in OCD. It is the hopes that with more awareness, treatment can improve. By having an international organization for this disorder, it allows the world to see that it is a public health problem that needs to be given proper attention. With this site, doctors and researchers can gain more information on the topic. It also provides a support system for those who have OCD who may feel alone and confused in their struggle.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Sierra Tucson
- **Web address:** <http://www.sierratucson.com/about.php>
- **Summary of the information:**
 - Sierra Tucson is a psychiatric hospital for the treatment of addictions and behavioral disorders such as OCD. It is one of many mental health hospitals that try to help those who suffer from mental illnesses. It is a treatment facility

that offers a number of different ways to help patients overcome their disorders. They provide animal-assisted therapy and fitness equipment such as rock wall climbing, a fitness center, and walking trails to further assist patients in their treatment. They accept phone calls and e-mails from people who would like to go to the facility. They welcome a number of different problems that people may have including those from pain, grief, behavior problems like OCD, and addiction. Their Web site provides outlines for each type of program that a patient will receive. They also provide a self-evaluation quiz to help people who may be unsure if they do have a mental health problem.

Conclusions

I have learned many new interesting facts about OCD by doing this fact sheet. I had no idea how common it is for people to suffer from this disorder. I was very surprised to find out that 2.2 million people have this in America. This doesn't even include people that live outside of the States. I found it interesting to learn that OCD can be caused by genetic problems as well as environmental factors. I had never heard of certain parts of the brain that several of the articles that I found talked about. The articles that I used for my fact sheet were very informative and helped me to better understand how the brain is involved in the development of OCD. Another fact that I was not expecting to find is that OCD usually starts in childhood and is diagnosed in the teenage years. Before doing this project, I never thought that it was common for children to have OCD. When I had OCD as a child I thought I was the only one. Before researching this topic, I still thought it was very rare that I had OCD at such a young age. However, by doing this topic it has helped me to realize that it wasn't so unusual that I suffered from this as a child. I am glad that I picked OCD for my fact sheet. Not only did it help me understand myself as a child more, but it also helped me to better relate to what my friend is experience in her struggle with OCD.

Five-minute Twitter Brief

“Currently, hoarding is considered a symptom of OCD. However, researchers are trying to name hoarding as its own mental illness.”

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