



Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky

A LEADER IN PROVIDING ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS

EDUCATION AND SCREENING OUTREACH PARTNER FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND
NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

513 Madison Avenue, 3rd Floor Covington, KY 41011 859-431-1077 or www.mhanky.org

OBSESSIVE - COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Background

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a potentially disabling brain disorder. According to some studies, the severe form of OCD affects roughly one in 200 American adults, usually with onset in early adulthood. Individuals who suffer from OCD become trapped in a pattern of repetitive thoughts or behaviors that they view as irrational and unwanted but have extreme difficulty in overcoming. They experience problems in the normal control of thoughts (obsessions), which can lead to repetitive actions (compulsions). OCD is chronic and recurring and often accompanied by depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders.

Causes

Growing evidence suggests that genetic and other biological factors can cause OCD :

- OCD can be a hereditary illness, according to current research. Some families have at least four successive generations with clear cases of OCD
- Evidence indicates that OCD might be caused by abnormal metabolism in the frontal part of the brain.

Treatments

There are currently two primary treatments for OCD - medications and psychotherapy :

- Most medications approved by the FDA for treating OCD are antidepressants which balance the brain chemical serotonin ; Clomipramine (Anafranil), Fluoxetine (Prozac), and Fluvoxamine (Luvox).
- In certain cases, medications used to treat schizophrenia, such as haloperidol (Haldol) and Pimozide (Orap) can help relieve symptoms.
- Psychotherapy helps people learn how to calm obsession-related anxiety and reduce or eliminate compulsive rituals. It entails repeated exposure to the triggers that cause anxiety, helping the person to modify compulsive behavior.

Treatment Success Rates

Medication and other therapies, often used in combination, can successfully treat the symptoms of OCD :

- Studies indicate that up to 80 % of individuals treated with medications improve, with average reduction in obsessions and rituals ranging between 30 and 70 %.
- On average, OCD is successfully treated with psychotherapy in 75 % of all cases.

New Treatments / Research Advances

Several promising new medications for OCD are currently being developed and tested :

- Antidepressants Sertraline (Zoloft) and Paroxetine (Paxil) are now being reviewed by the FDA for treatment of OCD
- Newer antidepressant medications for treating OCD that will be studied in the future are Venlafaxine (Effexor) and Nefazodone (Serzone). These medications apparently have fewer side effects than older antidepressants.