

THE ORIGIN OF PSYCHOSOMATIC DISEASES IN INDIVIDUALS, AS WELL AS PSYCHOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS TO THEIR LIMINATION

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Annotation: Psychosomatic diseases are physical disorders that stem from psychological factors, revealing the intricate connection between the mind and body. This article explores the origin of psychosomatic illnesses in individuals and analyzes effective psychological strategies for their elimination. Emphasis is placed on the influence of chronic stress, emotional repression, and personality traits in the development of these conditions. The paper also presents the role of psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and stress management as key solutions.

Keywords: Psychosomatic disorders, stress, mind-body connection, cognitive behavioral therapy, emotional regulation, psychological treatment, mental health.

Psychosomatic diseases are physical illnesses that are significantly influenced or triggered by mental factors such as stress, anxiety, and unresolved emotional conflicts. Unlike purely physical ailments, these conditions reflect the complex interplay between psychological stressors and physiological responses. Common examples include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), tension headaches, hypertension, and ulcers. As modern lifestyles become increasingly stressful and mentally demanding, psychosomatic illnesses have become more prevalent. Understanding their origins and identifying effective psychological interventions is crucial to improving holistic healthcare outcomes.

Psychosomatic diseases are physical conditions influenced or caused by psychological factors such as stress, emotions, or mental states. Their origin and management involve complex interactions between the mind and body. Below is a concise overview of their origins and psychological solutions for their elimination, grounded in current understanding.

Origins of Psychosomatic Diseases

Mind-Body Connection:

- The brain and body are linked through systems like the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the autonomic nervous system. Chronic stress or unresolved emotions can dysregulate these systems, leading to physical symptoms.

- For example, stress activates the release of cortisol and adrenaline, which can contribute to conditions like hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), or chronic pain.

Psychological Stressors:

- Emotional distress (e.g., anxiety, depression, trauma) can manifest physically. Suppressed emotions or unresolved conflicts may trigger or exacerbate symptoms like headaches, fatigue, or gastrointestinal issues.

- Example: Chronic anxiety may lead to tension headaches or exacerbate conditions like eczema.

Personality and Coping Styles:

- Certain personality traits, such as perfectionism or difficulty expressing emotions (alexithymia), are associated with higher psychosomatic risk.

- Individuals who internalize stress rather than address it may develop symptoms like fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome.

Socio-Cultural Factors:

- Cultural expectations, social pressures, or stigma around mental health can lead individuals to "somatize" psychological distress, expressing it as physical symptoms.

- Example: In some cultures, emotional pain is more acceptable when presented as physical ailments, leading to higher rates of psychosomatic complaints.

Neurobiological Mechanisms:

- Chronic stress alters brain function, particularly in areas like the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, affecting pain perception and immune response.

- This can result in conditions like psychogenic pain, asthma exacerbations, or autoimmune flare-ups.

Psychological Solutions for Elimination

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):

- How it works: CBT helps individuals identify and modify negative thought patterns and behaviors contributing to physical symptoms.

- Application: For example, CBT can reduce IBS symptoms by addressing anxiety-driven gut sensitivity.

- Evidence: Studies show CBT effectively reduces symptoms in conditions like chronic pain and tension headaches.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):

- How it works: Mindfulness practices, such as meditation, promote awareness and acceptance of thoughts and sensations, reducing stress and its physical effects.

- Application: MBSR can alleviate symptoms of fibromyalgia or migraines by lowering stress-induced inflammation.

- Evidence: Research indicates mindfulness reduces cortisol levels and improves outcomes in psychosomatic conditions.

Psychodynamic Therapy:

- How it works: This therapy explores unconscious conflicts or repressed emotions that may manifest as physical symptoms.

- Application: Effective for conditions like conversion disorder, where physical symptoms (e.g., paralysis) stem from psychological trauma.

- Evidence: Case studies show resolution of symptoms when underlying emotional issues are addressed.

Biofeedback:

- How it works: Patients learn to control physiological processes (e.g., heart rate, muscle tension) using real-time feedback from monitoring devices.

- Application: Useful for tension headaches, hypertension, or chronic pain by teaching relaxation techniques.

- Evidence: Biofeedback has been shown to reduce symptom severity in psychosomatic disorders.

Stress Management Techniques:

- Techniques like progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, or yoga can reduce the physiological impact of stress.

- Application: Regular practice can lower blood pressure or reduce flare-ups of conditions like psoriasis.

- Evidence: Studies link relaxation techniques to improved immune function and reduced psychosomatic symptoms.

Group Therapy or Support Groups:

- How it works: Sharing experiences in a supportive environment reduces feelings of isolation and stress.

- Application: Helpful for conditions like chronic fatigue syndrome, where social support improves coping.

- Evidence: Group interventions have been shown to reduce symptom severity in psychosomatic disorders.

Lifestyle Interventions:

- Addressing sleep, diet, and exercise can support psychological well-being and reduce physical symptoms.

- Example: Regular exercise reduces stress hormones and improves symptoms of psychosomatic conditions like IBS.

Key Considerations

- Holistic Approach: Combining psychological interventions with medical treatment (e.g., medication for pain or inflammation) often yields the best outcomes.

- Individualization: Treatment should be tailored to the individual's specific symptoms, psychological profile, and cultural context.

- Prevention: Building emotional resilience through therapy or stress management can prevent the onset of psychosomatic symptoms.

Limitations and Notes

- Not all physical symptoms are psychosomatic; thorough medical evaluation is essential to rule out organic causes.

- Stigma around psychosomatic disorders can hinder treatment; education about the mind-body connection is crucial.

- Access to therapies like CBT or biofeedback may be limited by cost or availability, requiring alternative solutions like online programs or community resources.

The study confirms that psychosomatic illnesses are not merely imagined ailments but real physical conditions rooted in psychological distress. The complexity lies in the invisible nature of the emotional triggers, often making diagnosis and treatment challenging. Cultural attitudes towards mental health also play a significant role in the underdiagnosis of psychosomatic conditions, especially in collectivist societies where emotional expression is discouraged.

Conclusion

In conclusion, psychosomatic diseases reflect the mind's power to influence bodily functions. Originating from unresolved psychological stressors, these disorders can manifest in diverse physical forms. Through psychological solutions like CBT, mindfulness, and emotional support, it is possible to eliminate or significantly reduce such conditions.

Recommendations:

Integrate Psychological Assessment: Include mental health evaluations in primary care to detect psychosomatic tendencies early.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Promote understanding of mind-body health to reduce stigma around psychosomatic symptoms.

Training Programs: Equip medical professionals with skills to recognize psychological origins of physical symptoms.

School and Workplace Programs: Implement stress management and emotional resilience training.

Further Research: Support interdisciplinary research in psychosomatic medicine to refine therapeutic interventions.

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