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SELF-ENUCLEATION OF BOTH EYES IN SCHIZOPHRENIA & INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: A CURSE OR A BLESSING?

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ABSTRACT

Self-Enucleation is a very unusual form of self-mutilation directly linked to mental illness. The common causes of self-mutilation includes schizophrenia^{1,2,3,4}, drug induced psychosis^{5,6}, obsessive compulsive disorder^{7,8}, depression, mental retardation and intellectual disability⁹. Organic causes of self-mutilation include also in organic epilepsy, encephalitis & diabetes mellitus. Successful self-mutilation of the eye may often be followed by anxiety relief^{10,11} whereas frustration is common and repeated attempts can be made when unsuccessful.

Here we present a rather rare case of 50 years old female, a case of schizophrenia with mental retardation (intellectual disability) with borderline diabetes and Ischemic heart disease (IHD). The Patient was admitted in chronic rehabilitation ward since long, she had deliberately removed both her eyes by a finger. A quick response from ward staff nurse observed and shifted her to ER for ophthalmic evaluation.

KEYWORDS: SELF-ENUCLEATION, INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, PSYCHOSIS, OEDIPISM, SELF-MUTILATION.

INTRODUCTION

Self-inflicted eye injuries are an unusual, but important form of self-mutilation. In this case a 50 year old female admitted in chronic rehabilitation ward of our institute presented with bilateral self-inflicted eye removal by her own fingers. Patient was suffering from chronic schizophrenia with intellectual disability (MR) with borderline diabetes mellitus and IHD.

Self-Enucleation or “Oedipism” is a rare but devastating consequence of mental disorders like schizophrenia and other forms of psychoses. Estimated prevalence is reported between 2.8 and 4.2 per 100,000 and incidence is about 1:30 million people per year in an equal male to female ratio^{3,5}. Self-inflicted eye injuries play a prominent role in our culture and ancient literature and mythology with the gain of other rewards.

CASE REPORT:

A 60 years female, suffering from psychiatric illness was admitted in our chronic rehabilitation ward since more than 25 years. She was diagnosed to be having schizophrenia with intellectual disability (MR) and borderline diabetes and IHD. She has a history of mental retardation since birth, later she developed psychosis. Her IQ evaluation found her to be having mild to moderate mental retardation. She was on long acting injectable Haloperidol deaconate (100mg) monthly along with olanzapine (10mg) per day with mood stabilizer and Benzodiazepines. She was asymptomatic with above medication but on and off disturbed behavior so we used to put her in

isolation room and sometime restrain her to prevent harm to herself.

Last month she woke up at midnight wandering in ward & went to her room. Suddenly staff nurse heard a loud scream of pain. They found that the patient with full of blood over eyes and mouth. On examination we found her eyes were bleeding and outside the orbit. Her fingers were soaked with blood. She removed both eyeballs with her own fingers. We shifted her in surgical department with help of ophthalmologist for emergency surgery. After surgery on inquiry patient revealed that without any reason she did , in fact removed her eyeballs with her own hand. She had no regrets about what she has done. On detailed longitudinal history it was revealed that she has tried to remove her stitches without any reason in past years.

DISCUSSION:

Ancient Egyptian mythology has legend of Horus, whose eyes were cast out in a battle, only to be returned to him and as a result he became stronger and more able to resist evil forces¹². Most famous story of Oedipus is about the legendary king of Thebes who killed his father and married his mother. When Pestilence (a disease that causes many people to die) had descended on Thebes, he consulted Oracle, who informed him of his murder and incest that was the cause for the pestilence. As result, Oedipus gauged out his eyes using his mother’s brooch. Literature of psychiatry is filled with a lot of history of self-enucleation (Rogers and Pullen, 1987).

Many psychodynamics theories exist to explain self-inflicted eye injuries as a form of self-mutilation. It is associated with either religious or sexual ideation and associated with intellectual disability (Mental Retardation)¹³.

CONCLUSION:

Individuals suffering from Psychiatric illnesses are prone to be harmful not only for others but also for themselves. Chronic Psychiatric illnesses especially schizophrenia is one of the reasons for such a self-mutilating behavior. In extreme cases it may lead to life threatening situations. Proper psychiatric evaluation and management can prevent such catastrophes. Self enucleation, as seen in our case, is one of the extreme forms of self-mutilating behavior seen in psychiatric patients. This needs to be prevented by means of proper management. Many of these patients display propensity for self-mutilation like in our patient there was a history of self-mutilating behavior in the form of removal of stitches. The patient prone for this kind of catastrophic behavior needs to be identified at an early stage so that aggressive management strategies can be made to prevent such an unfortunate occurrence.

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