



Letter to the Editor

People allergic to me and body dysmorphic disorder



1. Introduction

There exist some people who claim their body odor or appearance provokes allergy-like reactions in other people in their vicinity, including sneezing, runny nose, coughing, itchy eyes, and red eyes. Such a diathesis, called "people allergic to me (PATM)," has been gradually recognized in other countries. PATM cases have been reported, and PATM communities have been established, in China, the United States, Japan, and other countries. Unfortunately, there have been few reports in academic journals that focus on PATM (Yuji Kawakami and Keita, 2018), and therefore effective treatment has not often been instituted, and appropriate referrals have not been made, thus far. Here, we present a case of PATM diagnosed with body dysmorphic disorder (BDD). Informed written consent and a signed release from the patient authorizing publication have been obtained. Her anonymity has been preserved.

2. Case report

Ms. A, an 18-year-old woman, was in the second grade of high school. For nearly a year, she always felt that her face was askew to one side, so she constantly looked in the mirror and repeatedly corrected it with her hands. She felt that people around her noticed that her face was crooked, and that they all looked at her strangely and made various small gestures to show disgust, such as coughing, nuzzling their mouths, waving their hands, etc. She sometimes summoned the courage to ask passersby, "Do you think my face is crooked?" After receiving a negative answer, she still believed that her face was crooked. She became reluctant to go to school because she thought that her classmates began to cough as soon as she entered the classroom. She felt that her classmates disliked her, talked about her face, and deliberately avoided her, which made her feel very distressed. She began to search on the Internet and entered a community called PATM, where she met many people who had experiences similar to hers.

When she first visited a psychiatric hospital at the request of her parents, we comprehensively assessed and examined her. Her blood tests were within normal limits. She had no history of somatic disease or mental illness. Her family history was negative for mental illness. She fulfilled the DSM-V criteria of BDD. She was prescribed a 50 mg/day oral dose of Sertraline (which was increased to 100 mg/day after one week), and a 5 mg/day oral dose of aripiprazole (which was increased to 10 mg/day after one week), combined with cognitive behavioral

therapy (CBT). After four weeks of treatment, her symptoms were significantly relieved, and she could continue to go to school.

3. Discussion

In contrast to DSM-IV, DSM-5 provides a clearer demarcation of delusional disorder from psychotic variants of obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder (Carpenter and Tandon, 2013). According to the description in the DSM-5, BDD is a condition in which the patient believes that some normal or very near normal aspect of his or her physical appearance is distorted or ugly, causing feelings of shame and embarrassment, and leading to spending hours at the mirror daily as the patient tries to conceal or remove the perceived abnormality via the development of ritualistic behavior (Koblenzer, 2017). The prevalence rate of BDD is 0.7%–2.4% (Buhlmann et al., 2010). Most of the cases of BDD begin in adolescence and have a long course of disease. This case suggests that BDD and PATM have similar symptoms to a great extent, and therefore we suggest that people with PATM should be screened for BDD. The Dysmorphic Concern Questionnaire (DCQ) (Mancuso et al., 2010) is a brief, seven-item, dimensional questionnaire that may assist in the recognition of BDD, and the Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale modified for Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDDYBOCS) (Phillips et al., 1997) can be used to estimate the severity of symptoms. The identification of BDD in people with PATM enables patients to receive standardized treatment, which can improve the prognosis.

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