

Descriptive Psychopathology of Obsessions and Compulsions of a Clinic Population of Patients with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

S.R. Perera¹, D.A.C.L. Dalugama², R.A. Higgoda² and G.S.S.R Dias³

¹Teaching Hospital, Peradeniya

²Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya

³Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) affects approximately 2-3% of the adult population and is considered a debilitating and costly disorder, with associated impairments spanning the social, occupational, and familial domains. OCD is characterised by obsessional symptoms and compulsive behaviour. The obsessional symptoms include thoughts, images, ruminations and impulses. Compulsive behaviour ranges from overt acts to covert ritual or a mental manipulation.

Objectives of the present study were to describe the frequency of the type of obsessions and the compulsions in a clinic population. The study also attempts to describe the contents of the obsessions and compulsions of the study population.

All patients with OCD who were registered as out patients from 1997 to 2003 were included in the study. Patients were traced back from the clinic register where the final diagnosis of OCD was made by the consultant psychiatrist at their first visit. The relevant clinic notes were traced back and data on epidemiology as well as details of the particular obsessions and compulsions were recorded from the clinic notes. The study population consisted of 23 males and 17 females, and their average age was 27.7 years.

The main type of obsession in this study was obsessive thoughts (70%) followed by ruminations (25%). The main theme of the obsession was to do with cleanliness (45%). Therefore, as observed in the study, washing behaviour is a commonly practiced (25%) ritual.