

Schizotypal personality disorder and homeopathy: case report

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Abstract

Personality disorders are a group of conditions characterized by an inability to get on with other people and learn from experience. People with a personality disorder may find that their beliefs and attitudes are different from those of most other people. Others may find their behavior unusual, unexpected or perhaps offensive. In this paper, we discuss a case of a 42-year-old man with schizotypal personality disorder with typical delusions of being abused and persecuted and subsequent fornication. With a properly selected homoeopathic medicine the patient experienced symptom improvement in self-confidence, somatic complaints, stress and worry, anxiety, and delusions, suggesting that homoeopathy is quite useful in the treatment of such personality disorders.

Keywords

Personality disorders; Cluster A personality disorders; Homeopathy; Constitutional treatment; Case report

Introduction

People with schizotypal personality disorder are typically socially isolated, like those with schizoid personality disorder. In addition, however, they also behave in ways that would seem unusual to many of us, and they tend to be suspicious and to have odd beliefs. People given a diagnosis of schizotypal personality disorder are often considered “odd” or “bizarre” because of how they relate to other people, how they think and behave, and even how they dress. They have ideas of reference, which means they think insignificant events relate directly to them [1].

Further research on the treatment of people with this disorder is important for a variety of reasons. They tend not to improve over time and some evidence indicates that some will go on to develop the more severe characteristics of schizophrenia.

Case report

R was born and raised in Hisar, Haryana. His father, who died when R was 18, was a janitor at a local department store. His mother was a homemaker. Neither parent finished high school, and R was born when they were only 17. R is 42 years old and has worked as a driver for a postal company for the past 15 years. He reports that for the past few months he had a feeling of crawling under the skin that is temporarily relieved by scratching. This sensation is so intense that he even gets up from sleep at night to scratch.

Appearance: Petite man. Looks drawn and tired, sits with his arms folded across the chest.

R is an only child and tells that he got a lot of attention. He says that he loved his parents very much, "but they were kind of weird." He adds, "They were like me. Just different, you know?"

R never married, explaining, "I liked the girls OK and all that", but never developed a steady relationship. He says he always felt "nervous with the girls and such" and that avoids making any significant overtures with women. He meets his sexual needs in a matter of fact way by visiting a prostitute on a regular basis and describes their sexual encounters as highly regimented. He refuses to elaborate on this point, stating that his mother taught him to "never talk about dirty things".

R says he channels a lot of his energy into long walks. Every evening, he goes for a walk, sometimes lasting up to 5 hours. His neighbors were often concerned upon watching him walk alone late at night and the police was called on several occasions. Recently, however, R lost his interest in the walks, explaining that the streets are too dangerous. He attended temple on a regular basis throughout his life and engaged himself in a number of community activities; people seem to appreciate his involvement, although they find him a bit odd.

During the past two years, coworkers noticed a gradual change in R. While he always seemed a bit unusual along the past few years, his social interactions seem confused and inappropriate. He sometimes smiles when he is angry, and often seems distressed and agitated when everyone else is laughing. A coworker who befriended him reports that R may be using hallucinogenic drugs, which he denies.

Although coworkers described decline as gradual, one dramatic event seems to have exacerbated his condition. He was scheduled to make a routine delivery, but instead of taking

the box into the store, he handed it to a pedestrian who happened walk by. As he handed it to this woman, he explained, "This is a gift from God - please keep it with you always." The puzzled pedestrian reported the incident to R's supervisor. The following day, R was unable to recall the incident, and had no explanation for it. Although his actions were highly unusual, it was an isolated incident and his supervisor let him off with a warning.

Unfortunately, the mistake became known around the station, and the coworkers teased him for several weeks. R explains that this mistake weakened his already low self-image, and undercut his confidence in his ability to perform his job. Ever since this event, R became very careful to avoid making mistakes. He routinely double-checks all his deliveries, sometimes running back to stores to confirm he delivered the correct box. He admits that sometimes hears voices of celebrities warning him in abusive and filthy language that he is making a mistake.

R spends his spare time in lone activities, like watching television (he watches a lot of Court TV and builds plastic military models). Along the past six months, he carefully checks all the locks at home in the evening. While he lives in a comfortable neighborhood, he says that all he youths in the area dislike him and might be planning to break into his house. He also disconnects his phone in the evening to avoid potential threatening calls.

Finally, R recently began insisting on that he has liver cirrhosis. Although medical tests were all negative, he says he can feel the organ rotting inside him. This thought seems to have developed after he watched a television program on the side effects of alcoholism.

Q: Can you please elaborate on the crawling sensation? Is it just an itch or something else?

A: Doctor, it is not an itch, it's just that something is moving inside my skin. It can occur anywhere and at any time, then I need to rub or scratch, which gives temporary relief. I tried my best to observe if it increases with any food or in any season, but couldn't notice anything.

Q: Is there any significant past history of any illness?

A: Nothing much, just a seasonal cold and cough. And few years back, I had a severe fungal infection under my armpits and groins. The itch was so intense at that time, especially at night that I used to scratch until it bled. Then I consulted a dermatologist, who prescribed antifungal ointments to be applied every 4 hours. The infection was so severe that I had to apply those ointments for more than a month.

Q: R, what happened on the day you made a mistake and delivered the package to a person on the street?

A: I don't remember it very well. It's like it was another time. Anyway, I know I was doing my regular work, running from place to place. I remember that I was really tired; I did my thing with my girlfriend really late the night before, and I was really tired. So I was working when one of the boxes started talking to me in a filthy language. They do that, sometimes. All the drivers know this.

Q: R, you used to enjoy taking walks. Why did you stop doing this?

A: I think it is too dangerous. This neighborhood isn't what it used to be. Even the shopping mall. The kids who sit there are dangerous. And they especially don't like people like me. They know about me, and they don't like it. Maybe they are just jealous. They know I'm older than them, and that they have to listen to what I say. So they don't like me and they try to think of ways to hurt me. Once, when I came out of the grocery store, a bunch of kids had pushed a shopping cart into my car. I'm just lucky I wasn't around when they did it.

Q: Do you drink much alcohol?

A: Yeah, but not that much. That stuff rots your guts. I can already feel it doing that to me. But I only have one beer a week. It's my limit. But now I'm stopping even that. Man, I can just feel my liver rotting. It's the strangest damn thing. It's like I can see inside my body, and it's so ugly. The doctors can't see it with their machines. But I can. I know what's going on inside my body.

Q: What is your favorite television program?

I like watching TV. Sometimes it's the only person I have to talk to. It's the only person who doesn't judge me. I really like watching the animal shows. I think it's really something the way these animals get around and do things. I could never do that many things because I'm too busy. I mean, once I ran all the way to the store to buy some bread and the store was closed. They shouldn't close on weekends so damn early. So I took a bath. [Notice how he jumps from one topic to another].

Q: Please tell me about your childhood.

A: I grew up mostly normal, I think. I was their only kid, and Momma and Daddy were really nice; they never pushed me to do anything. They tell me I was in diapers till I was over 4 years old, but they didn't worry about it. We were poor, and we usually didn't eat really well. But when daddy was working things were good. Daddy had problems keeping a job. People didn't like them. Like I told you, my parents were kind of funny, like me. They didn't have many friends, really, and Daddy had trouble with his bosses. Most nights we'd just sit at home, sort of talking or watching TV. Daddy and Momma, they got along pretty good. The only time they'd fight was when Daddy went away on his business trips. He'd be away for 2, 3 days. One week sometimes. That was the only time I ever saw them fight, when he came back from his trips.

Q: R, do you think you have a problem?

A: I don't know. I talked with my girl about it. She told me she didn't want to visit me in a mental hospital, and so I told her she didn't have to. I mean, there isn't any reason why she should drive her car so far. Man, cars are really expensive and she doesn't have a lot of money. I know that money shouldn't be all that important, but it really is. If you don't have money, you don't have shit. [Once again, notice how he shifts from one topic to another.]

Family history: Maternal grandmother died in her 50s from tuberculosis. Father had rheumatic and muscular complaints. Alcoholic.

There was nothing peculiar or important in his personal history, apart from his strong aversion to fish and his disturbed sleep due to overcrowding of thoughts.

I chose the following rubrics:

1. MIND - AILMENTS FROM - mortification
2. MIND - DELUSIONS - voices - hearing - abusive and filthy language; voices from within him are speaking in
3. MIND - DELUSIONS - disease - incurable disease; he has an
4. MIND - DELUSIONS - accused, she is
5. MIND - DELUSIONS - persecuted - he is persecuted
6. MIND - SUSPICIOUS - talking about her, people are
7. MIND - THOUGHTS - persistent
8. GENERALS - HISTORY; personal - discharges; of - suppressed
9. GENERALS - FOOD and DRINKS - fish - aversion
10. SKIN - FORMICATION
11. SKIN - FORMICATION - scratching - amel.
12. SKIN - WORMS; sensation of - Under the skin

The remedy that came through these rubrics was *Zincum metallicum* (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Repertory analysis [2]

	zinc.	ign.	acon.	alum.	aur.	bell.	calc.	lach.	nat-m.	phos.	puls.	staph.	stram.	sulph.	anac.	ars.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	9	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
1.																
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Prescription: Zinc 1M, single dose.

Follow up

After taking 1 dose of the remedy, the patient said, "Nothing happened. Everything is the same as before. I still feel the crawling under my skin. Nothing has changed at all." **Plan:** Wait

40 days later: "Overall, I feel better. The crawling sensation is less, now I only feel it at bedtime. My mind is calmer. I have come back. I went through some erratic stuff a while ago. It didn't feel okay for me to be so way out and weird. It was a hallucination based on my emotions not working or on negative emotions. I was doing things that were abnormal during the 3 weeks when things went haywire just before I came to see you. I felt some bodily discomfort, which lasted until recently, such as sore muscles, twitching, and various sensations running through my body. Before I took the remedy I had communications in the back of my head. I heard voices. This has stopped now. One voice bothered me. It was a very critical voice that exposed my family or said things that weren't true, sexual things. I'm still restless at

night, but now I go for a strong walk, come home and fall asleep. *Assessment:* His self-awareness is back under control; he's expanding into the universe anymore. The remedy is correct. *Plan:* Wait.

Six months after taking the remedy: "My behavior is going into the pit. I started dropping things at work and switching the lights on and off. I'm pulling inward, away from the world. Somehow retreating. Restless. Can't sit still. Rocking back and forth. Unaware, until my girlfriend told me. Can't go to work. Just arrange and rearrange the same shelf. Can't stop. It feels incomplete and not together. Can't seem to get it all together. Feel lost inside. Not sleeping. Wandering at night. Finding places to sit and look into the darkness." *Assessment:* I could not find the cause of this relapse or anything else that could have interfered. A repetition of the remedy would be a would test of its effectiveness. *Plan:* Zinc 1M, single dose. It would be a good test for the remedy, to see if a repetition would keep the case moving forward.

Follow up: "After the remedy I slept for 2 days. Back at work. Able to work. Feeling shaky still. I think things are better now. But again I got a fungal infection under my armpits" [return of old symptom]. *Plan:* wait.

Long-term follow-up: I saw the patient again several times. He continued to be well; no longer with the feeling of crawling under the skin. The symptoms of sleeplessness were much better. The fungal (tinea) infection healed by itself within few days. He does no longer walk on the street at night. No additional medication was needed. His ability to interact with people continued to improve. The patient recovered and remained well for the last 2 years.

Discussion

With this case we learned that the homeopathic understanding of health is closely connected to its understanding of the mind. The homeopathic approach catalyzes a healing process that raises the person's overall level of health by reaching a state of balance mentally and physically. Constitutional treatment is an innovative healing modality, which helps eliminating behavioral negativities by taking into account the individual's overall nature, personality traits and attitude towards life. These remedies act on the mind by tapping one's natural ability to release negative emotions and restore well being.

With a properly selected homeopathic medicine, the patient reported here experienced improvement of self-confidence, somatic complaints, stress and worry, anxiety, and depression, suggesting that homoeopathy is quite useful in the treatment of such personality disorders.

References

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