

Paranoid Personality Disorder



American Description

Diagnostic Criteria

- A. A pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by four (or more) of the following:
 - A. suspects, without sufficient basis, that others are exploiting, harming, or deceiving him or her
 - B. is preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of friends or associates
 - C. is reluctant to confide in others because of unwarranted fear that the information will be used maliciously against him or her
 - D. reads hidden demeaning or threatening meanings into benign remarks or events
 - E. persistently bears grudges, i.e., is unforgiving of insults, injuries, or slights
 - F. perceives attacks on his or her character or reputation that are not apparent to others and is quick to react angrily or to counterattack
 - G. has recurrent suspicions, without justification, regarding fidelity of spouse or sexual partner
- B. Does not occur exclusively during the course of Schizophrenia, a Mood Disorder With Psychotic Features, or another Psychotic Disorder and is not due to the direct physiological effects of a general medical condition.

Note: If criteria are met prior to the onset of Schizophrenia, add "Premorbid," e.g., "Paranoid Personality Disorder (Premorbid)."

Delusions

Definition

A delusion is an unshakable belief in something untrue. These irrational beliefs defy normal reasoning, and remain firm even when overwhelming proof is presented to dispute them. Delusions are often accompanied by **hallucinations** and/or feelings of **paranoia**, which act to strengthen confidence in the delusion. Delusions are distinct from culturally or religiously based beliefs that may be seen as untrue by outsiders.

Description

Delusions are a common symptom of several mood and personality-related mental illnesses, including **schizoaffective disorder**, **schizophrenia**, shared psychotic disorder, major depressive disorder, and **bipolar disorder**. They are also the major feature of delusional disorder. Individuals with delusional disorder suffer from long-term, complex delusions that fall into one of six categories: persecutory, grandiose, jealousy, erotomanic, somatic, or mixed. There are also delusional disorders such as **dementia** that clearly have organic or physical causes.

Persecutory

Individuals with persecutory delusional disorder are plagued by feelings of paranoia and an irrational yet unshakable belief that someone is plotting against them, or out to harm them.

Grandiose

Individuals with grandiose delusional disorder have an over-inflated sense of self-worth. Their delusions center on their own importance, such as believing that they have done or created something of extreme value or have a "special mission."

Jealousy

Jealous delusions are unjustified and irrational beliefs that an individual's spouse or significant other has been unfaithful.

Erotomanic

Individuals with erotomanic delusional disorder believe that another person, often a stranger, is in love with them. The object of their affection is typically of a higher social status, sometimes a celebrity. This type of delusional disorder may lead to stalking or other potentially dangerous behavior.

Somatic

Somatic delusions involve the belief that something is physically wrong with the individual. The delusion may involve a medical condition or illness or a perceived deformity. This condition differs from **hypochondriasis** in that the deformity is perceived as a fixed condition not a temporary illness.

Mixed

Mixed delusions are those characterized by two or more of persecutory, grandiose, jealousy, erotomanic, or somatic themes.

Causes and symptoms

Some studies have indicated that delusions may be generated by abnormalities in the limbic system, the portion of the brain on the inner edge of the cerebral cortex that is believed to regulate emotions. The exact source of delusions has not been conclusively found, but potential causes include genetics, neurological abnormalities, and changes in brain chemistry. Delusions are also a known possible side effect of drug use and abuse (e.g., amphetamines, **cocaine**, PCP).

Diagnosis

Patients with delusional symptoms should undergo a thorough **physical examination** and patient history to rule out possible organic causes (such as dementia). If a psychological cause is suspected, a mental health professional will typically conduct an interview with the patient and administer one of several clinical inventories, or tests, to evaluate mental status.

Treatment

Delusions that are symptomatic of delusional disorder should be treated by a psychologist and/or psychiatrist. Though **antipsychotic drugs** are often not effective, antipsychotic medication such as thioridazine (Mellaril), haloperidol (Haldol), chlorpromazine (Thorazine), clozapine (Clozaril), or risperidone (Risperdal) may be prescribed, and cognitive therapy or psychotherapy may be attempted.

If an underlying condition such as schizophrenia, depression, or drug abuse is found to be triggering the delusions, an appropriate course of medication and/or psychosocial therapy is employed to treat the primary disorder. The medication, typically, will include an antipsychotic agent.

Prognosis

Delusional disorder is typically a chronic condition, but with appropriate treatment, a remission of delusional symptoms occurs in up to 50% of patients. However, because of their strong belief in the reality of their delusions and a lack of insight into their condition, individuals with this disorder may never seek treatment, or may be resistant to exploring their condition in psychotherapy.