

Parasites and Mental Illness: Delusions of Parasitosis

By Simon Yu, MD

Are you one of those people constantly worrying about parasite infestation? You are not alone. There are millions of people suffering from the “delusion” of parasites invading their body, crawling under their skin, nibbling their flesh and taking away all the nutrients from their body. Typical patients are white women over 40 and well educated with no obvious cognitive impairment or signs of psychiatric disorder. Many people are labeled with a psychiatric condition of “Delusions of Parasitosis” but are they properly diagnosed?

Most of the patients go first to their family physician and then to an array of specialists that could include: 1) an internist specializing in infectious disease, 2) a parasitologist, 3) every known specialist based on their symptoms such as a dermatologist or proctologist or others and 4) eventually seeing psychiatrists. (Parasites are a very real problem for a very large number of people in the U.S. and the World. For more articles on parasites and related symptoms, see my web site at www.preventionandhealing.com.)

The diagnosis of “Delusions of Parasitosis” is finally confirmed when all diagnostic tests fail to support the patient’s history, condition and complaints. Patients are usually angry and hostile for being given this diagnosis. Psychotherapy is very limited. A psychiatrist may end up resorting to antipsychotic medication to control the patient’s “delusions.” Dr. Hulda Clark’s name is often mentioned for describing this recent phenomenon of diagnostic labeling of “Delusions of Parasitosis.”

Before we make any assumption on a final diagnosis of “Delusions of Parasitosis”, we need to ask, “Does conventional medicine really use the proper tools to uncover parasitic infestations?” One of their primary, if not sole, tests is a microbiology lab test. How reliable is this test? This test of routine stool evaluation for ova and parasites picks up less than 10 % of active infections. There are hundreds of parasites with very complicated life cycles that can exist outside the intestinal tract. Therefore they wouldn’t be detected by this test. Many of these parasites can penetrate through skin, lung, nostril and every known organ and tissue in the body.

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that 2 billion people have worms which are rarely seen in the stool exam. I believe those numbers are very conservative. I believe those numbers are limited to worms and nematodes and not inclusive of all parasitic infestations. The WHO estimates that 1.5 billion people worldwide suffer from a neuropsychiatric disorder. Of the 10 leading causes of disability in 1990, four were psychiatric disorders: major depression, manic bipolar depression, schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorders.

The cause of psychiatric disorders and mental illness has been hotly debated and controversial. It has included genetics, nutrition, environmental toxins, drugs and one’s family environment. A minority of physicians and therapists believe there is overwhelming evidence that infectious agents may play a key role in causing mental illness. Dr. E. Fuller Torrey, former professor of psychiatry at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, MD wrote a book, “The Invisible Plague: The Rise of Mental Illness from 1750 to the Present.” He is a big proponent of linking mental illness with infectious agents as a key cause of mental illness reaching its current epidemic proportions.

Most well known common infections capable of producing mental illness or its symptoms include syphilis, Lyme disease, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, sepsis, malaria, HIV, Legionnaires Disease, chlamydia, typhoid fever, herpes, tapeworms, giardia, ascaris, trichinosis, Toxoplasmosis Gondi and

streptococcal infections. Some of the symptoms are transient after the acute infection and some are followed by a long protracted disabling sequence of physical and mental breakdown.

Some specific correlations have been observed. Streptococcal infection has been associated with the onset of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Toxoplasmosis Gondi has been known to cause delusions, psychosis and auditory hallucinations. Dr. Paul Fink, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, has acknowledged that Lyme disease alone has been known to mimic every known psychiatric diagnosis in the Diagnostic Symptoms Manual (DSM III). It is interesting to note that many anti-psychotic medications have anti-viral and anti-parasitic activities. Maybe these actions of the medications are the real reason for a reduction in psychotic conditions, at least in some percentage of people.

We are at a cross roads between 21st Century conventional medical science and “Alternative” medicine. Many people are suffering from psychiatric problems and receiving anti-psychiatric medications for the wrong reasons and a wrong diagnosis. Perhaps believing that medical science sponsored by pharmaceutical companies is impartial and fair is a delusion in itself. Patients suffer from the delusion of parasitosis. Therapists suffer from the delusion of blind faith on double blind randomized medical trial studies.

Maybe there are two opposing delusions: Delusions of Parasitosis and Delusions of the Merits of Science. Perhaps Hulda Clark was right all along that parasites and all disease known to humans have intimately evolved together. It might be worth while to de-worm everybody. You could ask your Veterinarian to de-worm your cats, dogs, children and you. Or you could take a less radical approach and ask your alternative medical practitioner for parasite remedies for your “Delusions of Parasitosis.”

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