

P01-444

CULTURE BOUND SYNDROMES- A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY FROM INDIA

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Introduction: Sociocultural factors profoundly influence and determine every aspect of psychiatric disorder. The term culture bound syndrome refers to psychopathological entities that are not mere variants of well recognized psychiatric disorder, have a geographically defined prevalence, and are largely determined, at least in their symptoms by the beliefs and assumptions prevalent in the native culture. Dhat syndrome, possession syndrome, Koro, Ascetic syndrome, Gilhari syndrome are some of the frequently reported culture bound syndromes from Indian subcontinent.

Objectives: To assess the prevalence rates and psychiatric co morbidities in patients affected by Dhat syndrome, possession syndrome, Koro, Ascetic syndrome, Gilhari syndrome.

Methods: 50 subjects of either sex affected by at least one of the following culture bound syndromes - Dhat syndrome, possession syndrome, Koro, Ascetic syndrome, Gilhari syndrome were recruited on consecutive basis from the patients attending psychiatry outpatients department of a tertiary care hospital in Delhi, India. The selected subjects were assessed for respective prevalence rates and co morbidity profile in patients affected with above listed culture bound syndromes.

Results: Of 50 cases of culture bound syndromes seen in psychiatry OPD, Dhat syndrome was most common (80%), followed by Possession syndrome (14%), Ascetic syndrome (2%), Gilhari syndrome (2%), Koro (2%). Depression was the most common associated psychiatric disorder.

Conclusions: Culture bound syndromes exhibit significant psychiatric co morbidity, this study calls for careful evaluation of these patients psychologically to detect and treat the associated psychiatric co morbidity appropriately.