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## Blindside of Corona: An OCD Worsener



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### ABSTRACT

Lockdown or the system of quarantine can be praising to cease or to reduce the transmission of coronavirus but this is not less than a nightmare for those suffering from psychological problems or mental illness, or recovering from the same, this has built up a lot of pressure with additive of anxiety and fear on them, it's like throwing them in a room full of darkness with no hope of light from anywhere, pandemic due to COVID-19 has definitely came as an ill omen for all of us, and force all of us to be more cautious in every move, but for people suffering from OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) who are already being cautious most of the time, being careful about contamination, this pandemic has escalated their problems by many folds in every terms leading to more adverse symptoms and ultimately decreasing their quality of life.

## INTRODUCTION

A virus has manifested the world that still nature is superior to any medical facility or fraternity. A virus, a zoonotic disease which emerges from Wuhan province of China has expanded its root all over the world and became pandemic within a month of its spread and proved out to strive a challenge in front of whole world, as whole world is dealing with corona and still trying to find a confirmatory way to prevent or cure it.

World Health Organization (WHO), Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) all have directed to maintain social distancing, mandatory covering of mouth and nose while going out or while sneezing and regular hand wash with proper sanitization of self, these act as a protective measure and serve as a basic principle to keep the virus away from every individual as it is highly contagious which spreads through droplets from the mouth and nose when a person coughs or breaths out, touching a contaminated surface then touching face or coming in close contact with infected person and cause mainly flu-like symptoms and lung infection later on.<sup>[1]</sup>

This virus forced most part of the world to undergo lockdown and make the people to stay at home or quarantine themselves to stop it from spreading further.

If you think, corona came out as a curse for people with weaker immunity, asthma, old age people, you are right, but have we ever given a minute to think of the psychological problem that this COVID-19 pandemic is causing us.<sup>[2]</sup> Fear and anxiety is most distinctive factors which resides in all of us due to this coronavirus, as it is responsible for causing highly infectious disease infecting about 20 million and leads to demise of around 7 lakhs worldwide and the numbers are yet counting up as research is still in progress for vaccine and treatment protocol had gone through many changes as per research and treatment trials for better results.

## METHODS

This review is focused on the effect of COVID-19 and pandemic on individuals suffering from OCD or those in recovery phase. Therefore, PubMed (Medline), Elsevier, Cochrane and Google Scholar databases were searched using the terms 'Obsessive- Compulsive Disorder' or 'COVID- 19' or 'Effect of covid-19 on individual suffering from mental illness'. Furthermore, we searched the currently available scientific literature.

## DISCUSSION

One of the most deteriorating state after the outbreak is likely to be of OCD patients (psychiatric illness) which already carries contamination obsession into their mind or already have a thought of almost everything being infectious or contagious around them, this came out as an exaggeratory factor for them as they are already dealing with environment or surrounding to stay away from contamination and due to this they have compiled to set a rule of washing their hands frequently, recurrent washing of cloths or frequent wiping of floor to stay away from any kind of infection and here, corona is acting like a clinch of fear added in the form of garnishing to haunt them.<sup>[3,4]</sup>

This already acts as an additive effect to their already existing self-developed fear and causing more suspicious outlook towards the environment and forces them to be timid and has a huge impact on the individual way of thinking and dealing with things.<sup>[5]</sup> Increase in the amount of anxiety is the main problem or should be focused, as dealing with it is the main challenge for OCD patients.<sup>[6]</sup>

Every patient of OCD needs not to have same symptom and might carry symptom differing from others or other than contamination, obsession such as symmetrical obsession, unnecessary fear about someone or from someone, hoarding obsession and cause problem in different way to the patients.<sup>[7]</sup>

People with symmetrical obsession is obsessed with symmetry and get anxious when the symmetry about particular things gets disturbed or the position of certain things gets changed, and at the time of lockdown, having children at homes generally increases the probability of getting agitated by disturbed alignment or the things might also get broken during the time they play or may be due to another reason, may lead to increased level of anxiety and may act as an exaggeratory factor for their symptom adversity.<sup>[8]</sup>

Many people with OCD are obsessed with things and they do not like to discard the things because their mind is already preoccupied with the thought that certain things might be useful and can be saved for future, whether it is of use or not and this leads to hoarding compulsion where they tend to accumulate or keep things irrespective of their use and at the time of COVID certain kind of people might feel the need to over accumulate sanitizers, hand wash, masks, face shield, many tends to opt PPTs also unnecessarily and non-availability of things tends to increase the amount of anxiety.<sup>[9]</sup>

Many OCD sufferers already have suspicious outlook towards most of the individuals, and as corona progresses, they tend to have suspicion towards every individual about the transmission of virus more than normal.<sup>[10]</sup>

Most individuals carry obsession within themselves but within limit but people with OCD tends to have lot of obsession more than usual and to distinguish between normal obsession and obsession of OCD one must visit psychiatrist instead of taking it for granted or verifying themselves as it may be indicative of starting of symptom or symptom may get worse as time progresses.<sup>[11]</sup>

COVID can even lead individual to suffer from OCD as the individuals tend to elevate their own developed fear about contamination more than usual, more suspicious outlook towards other individuals, excessive washing of hands, excessive cleaning, over accumulation of things, and these are all distinctive feature of OCD.<sup>[12]</sup>

Cleaning is the important part of every individual's life but only up to a limit, more than usual can even cause many problems such as psychological problem, dermatological problem, depression, and most troublesome is their self-developed fear and doubt about everything they come in contact with.<sup>[13]</sup>

## **PROBLEM RELATED TO TREATMENT**

Many of the OCD patients might not be able to visit their psychiatrist, may not able to consult with them during the lockdown, and due to which their anxiety increases more as there might be chances of:

- No access to drugs in case of getting out of stock
- Personal or financial problem
- Fear in going outside or sending someone for it
- No regular psychotherapy session
- No access to consult to a psychiatrist
- Lack of internet if in case of online consultation and online psychotherapy sessions

- Lack of knowledge or awareness about online mode
- Unnecessary cultural belief related to their condition
- Increased fear and anxiety due to more free time and no work, as free mind is always open to all kind of thoughts whether good or troublesome.
- Lack of self-belief and confidence <sup>[14]</sup>

### **INSTRUCTIONS TO FAMILY MEMBER**

- OCD is actually a psychological disorder, in which thoughts persuade the individual, which should not be overlooked by family members instead should be supported by them over their symptoms and condition so that they do not bother much about their family, as they themselves might feel agitated or might not feel worthy as it gives a feeling of increasing stress to home, so support and counselling can play a handy role in it.
- Perform yoga sessions with them.
- Perform religious offerings, prayers, chanting with them.
- Create a great healthy atmosphere around them.
- Keeping communication positive and clear. <sup>[15]</sup>

### **EFFECT OF PANDEMIC**

Pandemics is not an usual phenomenon, it leaves a scar on minds on many individuals with psychic problems or even with normal healthy individual in the form of fear, agitation, anxiety.

It is pretty well known fact that individuals with previously known history of mental disorders or psychiatric problems are vulnerable to relapse, reoccurrence, might get subject to poor medication adherence, faults in self-care. <sup>[16]</sup>

Buildup of unnecessary thoughts is also one of the enigmas, which one may suffer in the lockdown due to the pandemic, after being in isolation or being apart from the loving ones make the situation even complicated for them which can cause the condition to revert back and suicidal thoughts may even pop out in such awful situation. <sup>[17]</sup>

With increase in number of cases and number of deaths in country and all over the world as shown in many channels in television, radio created a place of fear in one's mind and make the situation even more intricate. With each passing days of isolation, this has to become the centre of importance to take care of all the individuals with mental illness, because such problem suppress the chemicals in the brain such as serotonin, norepinephrine and prevent mind from being productive and make the individual suffer from many problem at a time with an additive of fear and anxiety.<sup>[18]</sup>

## CONCLUSION





Pandemic has developed really as a mess for many individuals but imagine a mess with individual already dealing with a psychological problem, it's something quite worrying or quite troublesome. There have been increase in level of anxiety due to unfavorable situation or conditions, and it can't be neglected and should be focused in a proper manner so that help reaches out to every section of the society because the consequences can be dangerous for such individuals.

Although Several measures have been taken for such individuals like The International OCD Foundation, Boston, analyzed the situation and came up with some fruitful efforts and offered several online resources, which are easily accessible to all and are done to help such individual charge less and gratuitous, they try to make the individual more sensible or will encourage to deal with their fear. Also, act as a medium in providing or passing the WHO approved tips on their self-developed fear and how to combat it through various videos, online lectures with maintaining physical distancing, various psychiatrist have also come forward and are helping patients through online mode, various psychotherapy sessions are also started on online platform, and with support from family members and friends one can deal with it more easily.

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