

Poster presentation

Compulsive buying: a review

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Background

Compulsive or pathological buying (or oniomania) is defined as frequent preoccupation with buying or impulses to buy that are experienced as irresistible, intrusive, and/or senseless. The buying behavior causes marked distress, interferes with social functioning, and often results in financial problems. It should be diagnosed as impulse control disorder not otherwise specified (ICD-10 F63.9). Compulsive buying has received increased research attention in the last decade.

Materials and methods

This review summarizes the literature on compulsive buying published during the past 15 years. Two medical libraries (MEDLINE, COCHRANE) were searched in order to investigate the related articles.

Results

Prevalence studies of compulsive buying found a rate between 1 and 6% in the general population. About 90% of those affected are female. Onset occurs in the late teens or early twenties, and the disorder is generally chronic. Psychiatric comorbidity is frequent, particularly mood, anxiety, substance use, eating, impulse control and obsessive-compulsive disorders. In other cases, bipolar disorders express themselves as impulsive behaviours i.e. pathological buying. Treatment has not been well delineated, but individual and group psychodynamic psychotherapy or cognitive-behavioural therapy may be helpful. Serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRI's) may help some patients regulate their buying impulses. Other pharmaco-

logical agents have also been used -opioid antagonists, mood stabilizers, and atypical antipsychotics.

Conclusions

Compulsive buying is characterized by repetitive compulsive and excessive misappropriated buying. Labels for this pathological behaviour vary and its classification is uncertain. To date, there is no consistent concept for diagnosis and treatment.

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