

A case report of obstinate gambling addiction - author's own experience

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ADICCIÓN OBSTINADA AL JUEGO

RESUMEN

Algunos autores consideran que el juego puede ser adictivo y la observación psiquiátrica puede evidenciar un síndrome obsesivo compulsivo. El autor trató a este paciente con sertralina y psicoterapia obteniendo una remisión total.

Consideramos que el setraline a dosis de 50 a 200 mg diarios es una droga adecuada para el tratamiento de estos desordenes.

Palabras clave: juego, adicción, síndrome obsesivo compulsivo, sertaline.

ABSTRACT

Some authors regard gambling as addiction. Detailed psychiatric examination revealed obsessive-compulsive syndrome in patient. The author treated the patient systematically with individual psychotherapy and sertraline from low doses up to the maximal dose (i.e. about 200 mg daily). A complete remission of the obsessive-compulsive syndrome was achieved. A number of indirect proofs demonstrate a significant role of sertraline in the aetiology of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. The most important evidence is the effectiveness of the drugs from the group of selective

inhibitors of serotonin central reuptake (SI-5HT) in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. Sertraline is safe and effective in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. Very numerous authors have used sertraline in the treatment of this syndrome with evidently good effect. Drug doses ranged from 50 to 200 mg daily.

Key words: gambling, addiction, obsessive-compulsive syndrome, sertraline.

Gambling is one of the very well known faults of some people. Some authors regard gambling as addiction. It leads in most cases to slow deterioration of a human being, to loss of money, not infrequently to selling of house furniture necessary for living and even to selling of whole appartments and houses. Gambling is not infrequently the cause of bankruptcy, leading whole family to poverty and extreme destitution. It is commonly known that men succumb to gambling far more frequently than women. Gambling often draws people for very long periods of life - these periods may frequently last for several to several scores of years. Gambling takes various forms worldwide, from card playing for money to various gambles, e.g. roulette. A characteristic feature of gambling addiction is the fact that it is always connected with playing for money. At the beginning of the addiction particularly dangerous for the possible future gambler is frequent winning in consecutive plays and rapid gathering of money. In such cases, gambling draws in a victim, that is gambling addiction develops rapidly and permanently. Rapidly growing sum of won money excites, encourages, intrigues, tempts, improves mood and frequently brings euphoria. Then other important matters in life become less interesting and slowly cease

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to count. Frequently, family, occupational work, various lofty aims in life become for a beginner gambler completely unimportant.

CASE REPORT

Male patient K.K, aged 50 years never received any psychiatric treatment. The patient was born after normal pregnancy and labour. His childhood was moderately successful. The patient's mother was tender, considerate, warm, affective and caring. The father was extremely busy with his occupational work and, therefore, had very little time for his family. Besides that he was rather peremptory, stand-offish, emotionally cold, resolutely imposing his will, with irascible moods, frequently verbally aggressive. Very frequently he used to make small rows over trifles. The patient has two younger sisters with whom, similarly as with his mother, he has very good and heartfelt contacts. His mother is alive, the father died two years ago. In primary school and secondary technical school the patient achieved medium results but he never repeated years. He got married at the age of 24. Presently the patient has one adult daughter who has a decent husband and a child. No mental diseases occurred in the patient's family. The patient gave no history of head trauma and loss of consciousness. He was never abusing alcohol. Out of serious somatic diseases, the patient has received medical treatment for chronic coronary artery disease. His marriage for the first 3-4 years was definitely good. His wife was very hard working, affective, warm, conscientious, caring. For the first 3-4 years the patient had no secrets from his wife. He worked hard as technician mechanic and spent much time with his wife and daughter. Then, patient's gambling became the curse of further life of the couple. After his colleagues' invitation he went to a club to play roulette. The initial series of consecutive winnings and quite great sum of money gathered became the cause of unhappiness of the patient and his family. For the first several months he managed to conceal his addiction from his wife. The patient, since that time, has been feeling a strong obsessive compulsion to go to the club to play roulette. The temptation was much stronger than logical, reasonable thinking. The patient for all these years has had a critical attitude towards his addiction. He has always thought that his gambling is without any sense. Soon his wife learned the truth. The patient no longer concealed his addiction. Several scores of times a day he had obsessive thoughts to go to the club to play roulette. His compulsory going to the club for roulette was regarded by the author as compulsion, i.e.

realization of obsessive thoughts. The whole of these manifestations formed chronic obsessive-compulsive syndrome. The patient was losing money ever more often. He sold his car and expensive furniture from his apartment. He was fired from his job since he stole his firm's money to pay debts assumed for paying consecutive roulette losses. He gave his wife no money. His wife's earnings were insufficient to make the ends meet. The patient moved then to his still young parents who supported him and watched that he was not going to play roulette, but this situation humiliated the patient very much. He was guarded by his parents but obsessive thoughts and strong temptation caused that he was clandestinely going out to the club where he continued to play roulette. The formal and emotional contacts with the patient were very good, affective. His current of thoughts was logical, normal. The mood was slightly depressed adequately to patient's living situation. He denied any suicidal ideation. He had numerous obsessive thoughts changing into compulsion. Detailed psychiatric examination revealed obsessive-compulsive syndrome. This diagnosis was confirmed by the following scales:

- ICD-10 scale
- Yale-Brown Obsession Scale
- Obsession and Compulsion Scale of the National Institute of Mental Health
- NIMH Global Scale of Obsession and Compulsion
- MAUDSLEY Obsession and Compulsion Inventory

Laboratory tests:

- basic laboratory blood and urine analyses gave normal results chest radiogram was normal,
- ECG record: medium-degree anteroinferior wall ischaemia in the form of T-wave flattening,
- EEG record was normal,
- eye fundus examination: normal,
- neurological examination: no focal and meningeal symptoms, physical examination was normal,
- cranial computed tomography: normal

The author treated the patient systematically with individual psychotherapy and sertraline from low doses up to the maximal dose (i.e. about 200 mg daily). A complete remission of the obsessive-compulsive syndrome was achieved.

DISCUSSION

Setraline is a selective serotonin central reuptake inhibitor. A number of indirect proofs demonstrate

a significant role of sertraline in the ethiology of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. The most important evidence is the effectiveness of the drugs from the group of selective inhibitors of serotonin central reuptake (SI-5HT) in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. Sertraline is safe and effective in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome. Very numerous authors have used sertraline in the treatment of this syndrome with evidently good effect. Drug doses ranged from 50 to 200 mg daily.

However, most authors think that sertraline doses in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome should be significantly higher than the doses of the drug administered in the treatment of "major depression". Some authors believe that 50 mg daily is sometimes the optimal dose in the treatment of major depression. Other authors prefer sertraline doses of about 100-150 mg daily in the treatment of major depression.

However, many authors think that for effective treatment of obsessive-compulsive syndrome higher sertraline doses are needed, about 150-200 mg daily. Sertraline is a very safe drug and is well tolerated by patients. Therefore, it turned out to be useful in the described patient who has been suffering from chronic coronary artery disease.

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