

Munchausen Syndrome

Munchausen syndrome (the syndrome of Baron Prášil) is a mental disorder. It belongs to the group of *factitious* (pretensive) disorders.

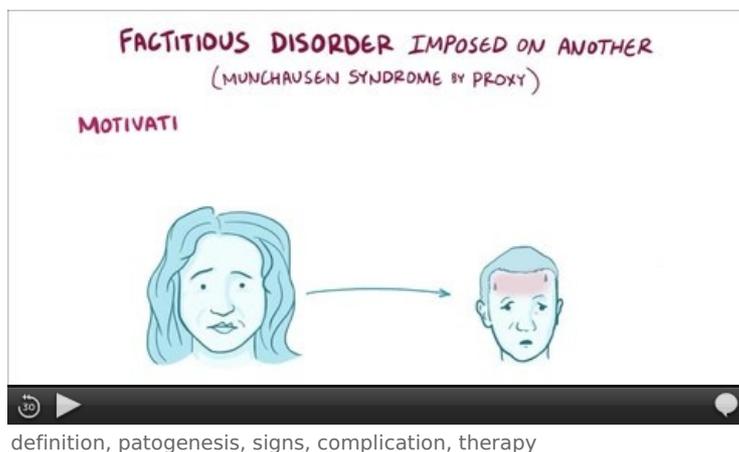
The disease presents through feigning of somatic or psychological issues, **the purpose of which is unclear**. Most commonly it is interpreted as an attempt to assume the role of sick to get in contact with the medical personnel.

Epidemiology

From the point of view of prevalence, the disease belongs to **rare conditions**. Worldwide, individual cases are described in case studies. Several cases have also been reported in the Czech Republic.

Sings

It can manifest itself by a **whole range of symptoms** - from simple feigning of pain to direct induction of pathology which can have lethal consequences. The affected individuals typically visit multiple medical facilities, complaining about problems that are difficult to explain though performed exams. To keep the pretence, patient can for instance add blood into urine, pinch themselves with needles or apply dirt or even feces into their veins.



Therapy

Therapy is not easy. The disorder tends to become chronic. Both psychotherapeutic and pharmacotherapeutic approaches are important and the treatment should be conducted by an experienced psychiatrist. The problem is that the affected individuals would not understand that they need treatment.

Differential diagnosis

- First it is necessary to exclude somatic disease.
- The difference between simulation and pathology is that the real pathology cannot be consciously manipulated.
- The differential diagnosis includes schizophrenia spectrum disorders, but in that case the symptoms would be accompanied by the apparent defect in thinking or perception.

Munchausen syndrome by proxy

It is a variant in paediatrics, where the **caregiver** (most often the mother) pretends that their child is sick, worsens the existing condition or **induces pathologies in the child**, which make them search medical aid and request diagnostic and therapeutic intervention.

Typical signs

- The child's illness is multi-systemic, chronic, unusual or rare.
- Symptoms are disproportionate or incongruent.
- Symptoms disappear in absence of the parent/parents.
- There was an occurrence of sudden infant death syndrome in the family.
- The child responds to the therapy in an unusual way.
- The parent is closely attached to the child and has medical knowledge.
- The parent urges the medical staff to perform further exams on the child.

Therapy

The child must be protected from harm! Often, it is necessary to remove the child from their parents' custody. In the cases where child health had been compromised, the persons responsible faced criminal charges. Cases ending in death are also known.

Links

External sources

- Munchausen syndrome on wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munchausen_syndrome)
- Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von Münchhausen (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baron_Munchausen)

Literature

- LEBL, Jan. *Klinická pediatrie*. 1. edition. Galén, c2012. 698 pp. pp. 653-654. ISBN 9788072627721.