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A STUDY ON COMORBIDITIES, KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES AMONG PATIENTS OF DHAT SYNDROME

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Introduction: Dhat syndrome is a commonly recognized clinical entity in Indian culture. It consists of vague somatic symptoms (fatigue, weakness, anxiety, loss of appetite, guilt, etc.) and at times sexual dysfunction (impotence or premature ejaculation), which the patient attributes to the passing of semen (Dhat) in urine as a direct consequence of his excessive indulgence in masturbation or sexual intercourse.

Objectives: To assess medical and psychiatric co-morbidities and prevalent knowledge and attitudes among patients of Dhat syndrome.

Methods: A cross-sectional study of 50 consecutive male patients with Dhat syndrome attending psychosexual clinic of a tertiary care hospital in Delhi was performed to ascertain co-morbid psychiatric and medical disorders and the prevalent knowledge and attitudes of subjects towards Dhat syndrome and its management.

Results: The commonest associated psychiatric illness was neurotic depression followed by anxiety neurosis. The commonest associated medical illness was urinary tract infections (UTI) followed by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Majority of subjects believed Dhat to be semen; that Dhat syndrome causes both physical and mental weakness and; that health tonics are required for successful management of Dhat syndrome. More than half of the subjects believed that masturbation causes Dhat syndrome. The study reveals a change in knowledge and attitudes of patients affected with Dhat syndrome in the last decade.

Conclusions: Dhat syndrome exhibits significant medical and psychiatric co-morbidity. The findings of this study need to be further evaluated in the immigrant population.