



CASE REPORT

Compulsive Stealing in a 15-Year-Old Girl: A Rare Presentation of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

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Abstract:

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) can occasionally present with unusual behavioral manifestations, making diagnosis challenging. We report a 15-year-old girl who was expelled from school after repeatedly stealing money from teachers. Traditional disciplinary measures failed. Psychiatric evaluation revealed obsessional compulsions driven by a persistent fear that her father would die if she did not steal, accompanied by severe depressive symptoms. She was treated with antidepressants and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and achieved complete remission within one month. This case highlights the importance of recognizing atypical presentations of OCD in adolescents.

Keywords: Obsessive-compulsive disorder, adolescent, compulsive stealing, depression, cognitive behavioral therapy, rare presentation.

1. Introduction:

Adolescent stealing is often perceived as conduct disorder; however, it may occasionally represent OCD, particularly when behaviors are driven by intrusive thoughts or irrational fears. Early recognition and targeted intervention are crucial to prevent social, educational, and legal consequences [1-5].

2. Case Presentation:

A 15-year-old girl was referred to the mental health clinic following repeated episodes of stealing from school teachers, ultimately resulting in expulsion. Disciplinary interventions, including punishment, had no effect. On psychiatric evaluation, she reported a persistent, intrusive fear that her father would die if she did not steal money. She recognized the irrationality of the compulsion but was unable to resist. Severe depressive symptoms were also present, including low mood, hopelessness, and anhedonia. There was no history of substance use, prior psychiatric disorders, or family financial problems [5-10].

Management and Outcome:

The patient was treated with antidepressant medication and engaged in cognitive behavioral therapy focusing on exposure and response prevention, and cognitive restructuring for her depressive thoughts. Within one month, she achieved complete remission of compulsive behaviors and depressive symptoms, returning to normal social and academic functioning.

Discussion:

Compulsive stealing as a manifestation of OCD is extremely rare in adolescents. Misdiagnosis as conduct disorder can delay effective treatment. In this case, the stealing behavior was a compulsion linked to obsessive fear, not motivated by monetary gain or gratification. Early intervention with pharmacotherapy and CBT led to rapid improvement.

Conclusion:

Clinicians should consider OCD in adolescents presenting with repetitive stealing, especially when behaviors are driven by irrational fears rather than deliberate misconduct. Prompt diagnosis and treatment can result in excellent outcomes and prevent social, educational, and legal complications.

Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from the patient's guardian for publication of this case report.

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