

Five rare psychiatric syndromes co-occurring together

Alireza G. Nejad, MD, Ali Kheradmand, MD.

Psychiatric rare syndromes are interesting subjects found all around the world, and we have no comprehensive model to classify them. This is partially due to the little body of knowledge that exists, and because of their rarity, we know of them mostly via case reports, which include only one or a few cases. In this report, we present a case with symptoms of 5 rare syndromes, including; lycanthropy, Cotard, subjective doubles, Fregoli, and Dorian Gray. Lycanthropy is the ability of human beings to undergo transformation into a wolf (Lykos means wolf in Greek). In psychiatric literature, lycanthropy is defined as an unusual belief or delusion that one has been transformed into an animal or a behavior suggestive of such a belief.¹ Cotard's syndrome was introduced in 1880 by Cotard,² and the central core of this syndrome is nihilistic delusion. The patient believes that he is dead or may deny his own existence or outer world. The patient may deny the existence of parts of his body or their function. Ideation of immortality is another part of this syndrome.³ In the syndrome of subjective double, the patient believes that other people have transformed into his own self. Experience of double was also named *doppelganger*.⁴ In the typical form of Fregoli syndrome, the patient identifies his supposed persecutor in several persons who may be different in shape, age, and gender.⁵ In Dorian Gray syndrome, the core of symptoms is a wish to remain young. In this syndrome, the patient may think that he remains young but others grow old.⁶

A 22-year-old, single, unemployed man was admitted to our psychiatric ward in Beheshti Hospital, Kerman, Iran for the first time. His symptoms started 3 weeks prior to his admission. His chief complaints were restlessness, insomnia, and aggression. His general symptoms included accusing his relatives of unfriendly behavior. He believed that his mother adds poison to his food and wants to decay his brain. He claimed that his thoughts were transformed into the engine of automobiles, which were passed around and then broadcasted. He had delusion of reference and attributed external events to himself. He also heard the voice of his thoughts from the working engine of automobiles. He believed that his brother injected his thoughts into his head when he was asleep. His specific symptoms were that he believed that he is a wolf, which was born from a human. To explain how he was born, he said the forehead of his father was opened and tear-shaped material was pulled out and entered his mother's umbilicus (he could not explain regular sexual

intercourse). He described the wolf as the strongest animal in the jungle, and as the boss and master of all the animals. In his view, the wolf always is a male and could never be a female. The wolf can do everything he wants. He has extraordinary power, for example, he can stop a running train. The wolf had a special city for himself. In this city, dead people who were revived by him were living. He believed that he (wolf) has a pair of glands named *hypnophys* (he knew *hypophys* and differentiated it from *hypnophys*) in his occipital area. These glands were connected to his eyes and so he can see everything behind him. He referred to his extra tooth, which was located between the incisor teeth (Figure 1) and claimed it is a snake's tooth and he can transform himself into any animal by rotating this tooth in his mouth. He said this ability belongs to a snake, but the wolf as master of jungle also has this power. To remain young forever, he stated that he emptied all his internal organs and saved them in a watermelon that was grown from a cannabis seed. He claimed, he reshaped this watermelon into an ampoule and whenever he wants to generate other wolves, he injects this ampoule and all the organs became replaced in their location. When he was asked more questions, he replied "there is nothing inside me, if you are not sure, you can take an x-ray of me". He believed that he (wolf) can marry with any human and animal and claimed that until the time of his psychiatric admission, he married approximately 30-40 thousands girls from different races (Chinese, Japanese, Indians, English, and so on). He believed that many of these girls fell in love with him and others were offered to him as gift by their fathers. He asked the girls at the beginning of the marriage, "what kind of animal do you love", then he generated that animal. He



Figure 1 - Patient's photo showing supernumerary tooth (mesiodens tooth) located between the incisors. He claimed it is a snake's tooth and he transforms into any animal by rotating it.

believed that what was reflected from the mirror when he looked at it was not his image, but it was a different creature that mimics his actions. He transferred all his pains and distress to this creature by looking in the mirror. One time he broke the mirror, but then all his thoughts spread. We took a picture with the patient with a digital camera. He looked at it and said, "it is not my picture, it is that creature". He described a city named Chakavash (not existing in the world), which was near his house and from which he could reach everywhere in the world within 2 hours with a motorcycle from that point. He believed that there were many individuals who are exactly the same as he. He attributed every event that happened for him, to them. He said they are my brothers and are from different nationalities and related to each other by camera, but he cannot see and hear them. He had no medical problem or history of drug abuse. Neurological examination, CT scan, and MRI of brain were normal. He was interviewed several times before starting any medication. He fulfilled the criteria of bipolar mood disorder based on DSM IV-TR. Schizophrenia was ruled out as all his symptoms were relieved after medication and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) treatment. He had no similar symptoms in his 6-month follow up. He received 800 mg sodium valproate, 8 mg risperidone, and 4 mg trihexyphenidyl. As he was so irritable and hostile, 9 sessions of ECT were started quickly to prevent any probable self harm or harming others. He was discharged with complete recovery 8 weeks later.

Lycanthropy from the folk-etymology point of view links to the word *Lycan*, a king of Arcadia who, according to Ovid's *metamorphoses*, was turned into a ravenous wolf in retribution for attempting to serve human flesh (his own son) to visiting Zeus in an attempt to disprove the God's divinity. In a recent review by Garlipp and colleagues,⁷ they found wolf/werewolf, dog, gerbil, rabbit, horse tiger, cat, bird, frog and bee as the object of transformation in the case reports of lycanthropy.¹ In all previous reports, the patient was transformed into one type of animal, but in this report for the first time, the patient believed that he was transformed into a wolf and also had characteristics of the snake. The snake is one of the ancient symbols, special characteristics such as coiled body, regular shedding of its skin, and split tongue have made the snake an important symbol. The snake has both positive and negative images and therefore is usually portrayed as a duality. In Persian folklore, the snake has only negative meanings and its tooth represents danger and power. The feeling of being a wolf and a snake at the same time shows the patient's delusion of grandeur. The patient's extra tooth may be the starting point of his complex symptoms. We suggested that there are 2 association points in this

patient, first misidentification, and second immortality. The patient believed that, he could transform himself into any animal. This sentence reminds us of Fregoli syndrome. But this form is not the classic type of Fregoli syndrome when the patient believed that, his own mind inhabits bodies of others, the term of subjective Fregoli was used. The co-occurrence of lycanthropy and Fregoli syndrome had not been reported before. The patient misidentified his mirror image. Feinberg and Keenan for the first time, referred to this condition.⁸ Their patient Susan referred to her reflection as the other Susan. Breen and colleagues³ reported 2 cases that misidentified their reflection as a stranger. It is not clear that the mirror condition is a correct variant of Capgras syndrome. Beside the patient's extra tooth, misidentification of his mirror image may play a role in symptom constellation. According to Young's theory,⁹ damage to the emotional component of face recognition can result in Capgras and Cotard's syndromes. If it is internally attributed, this will result in Cotard's syndrome, and if it is externally attributed, this will result in Capgras syndrome.³ There is at least one report of the co-existence of Capgras and Cotard syndromes. Misidentification syndromes could occur together. There is one report of the co-existence of intermetamorphosis and Fregoli syndrome,¹⁰ and a report of Fregoli with Capgras syndromes.¹¹ Depersonalization and derealization were 2 symptoms, which manifested before developing well-formed misidentification delusions. Nishida and colleagues¹² tried to classify misidentification delusions. Basically they divided these delusions into 2 main categories, first misidentification of human relationship (relational misidentification) and misidentification of identity itself represented by Capgras and Fregoli syndromes. Identity misidentification was sub classified into 3 types: division of identity (divided type), union of identity (unionized type), and transformation of identity (transformed type). Lycanthropy was suggested to be phenomenological involved misidentification delusion of animal transformation involving others or the self.

Now we want to discuss immortality as another point of association. Dorian Gray was first described at a symposium on lifestyle and aesthetic medicine by Brosig et al.⁶ The name alludes to Oscar Wilde's famous novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" in which, Dorian stays young while his image in the painting aged. He obtained this power by trading his soul. Ultimately after carrying out many crimes, he decided to destroy the portrait. The first description of this syndrome was applied to people seeking medical lifestyle products to remove signs of the aging process. Soon after, Brosig et al tried to provide psychodynamic formulation and diagnostic criteria for this syndrome.⁶ He suggested narcissistic fixation as a psychodynamic factor and

obsessive preoccupation with physical attraction (which he called dysmorphophobia), inability to mature and progress in terms of psychic development, and utilization of at least 2 medical offers in different areas as diagnostic criteria.⁶ Recently, Bell¹³ tried to present an explanation based on psychoanalytic theories for this syndrome. He said “some people create an illusory timeless world, to avoid the reality of the word, so the picture in the attic represents the threat that can never be fully faced out nor fully erased.” Here we present “Dorian Gray” syndrome as a fully psychotic presentation. The patient’s description was very similar to Oscar Wild’s novel. We also want to emphasize that our patient did not know anything about Oscar Wild. At the end of Oscar Wild’s novel, the patient brakes the mirror and immediately his thoughts spread. To our knowledge Dorian Gray syndrome as a rare psychiatric syndrome was not considered in psychiatric patients before. According to this case history, belief in remaining young, searching for endless pleasure like several marriages, and living in a world in which every part of it is easily accessible, can be suggested as a criteria for this syndrome in psychotic patients. In our patient, Dorian Gray syndrome existed with lycanthropy and Cotard’s syndrome. As wolves are immune from aging and most physical diseases, due to constant regeneration of their organs, they can therefore, be virtually immortal. So immortality can be considered a point of association between these syndromes. Previous reports include a 32-year-old man who believed that he transformed into a dog. He had also Cotard’s syndrome (immortality and nihilistic delusion).¹⁴ On literature review, we could not find any case report including more than 2 rare syndromes at the same time. We tried to formulate patient’s symptoms and suggested, misidentification based on depersonalization, and derealization, and ideation of immortality as 2 fundamental basis, upon which other symptoms are formed. Descriptive psychiatry, which only tries to classify syndromes and disorders, cannot illuminate such patients enough. We hope other case reports in the field of rare psychiatric syndromes can help us to understand the basis of syndromes in the future. As a limitation, we cannot provide neuropsychiatry formulation, because we found no neurological abnormality in the physical examination and available para clinic work up.

Co-occurrences of rare psychiatric syndromes are rare, but really important for clarifying psychopathology. We cannot rule out chance co-incidence of these rare syndromes, but we tried to find an association in

the patient’s rare symptoms that could clarify these syndromes, and hope that further reports in the future can help to explain the matter better.

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From the Department of Psychiatry, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran. Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Dr. Alireza G. Nejad, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Beheshti Hospital, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Bouvar Avenue, Kerman, Iran. Tel/Fax. +98 (341) 2110856. E-mail: ghaffari_ar@yahoo.com

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