

Escitalopram Treatment of Transvestic Fetishism: A Case Report

Samir Kumar Praharaj

Department of Psychiatry, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi, India

Corresponding author: Samir Kumar Praharaj, M.B.B.S., D.P.M., Senior Resident, Department of Psychiatry, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, New Delhi, India, 110001, E-mail: samirpsyche@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

This case report describes a 15 year old boy who had recurrent thoughts and urges to collect female undergarments, and wearing them for pleasure. He was successfully treated with escitalopram, which suggests dysregulation of serotonergic neurons in a subset of patients of transvestic fetishism, especially those who have symptoms resembling OCD (German J Psychiatry 2004; 7 (2): 20-21).

Keywords: Transvestic fetishism, escitalopram, serotonin

Received: 13.6.2004

Published: 20.6.2004

This case report describes a transvestic fetishist, a heterosexual male who derives sexual pleasure from cross-dressing. Like in other paraphilias, the onset of the paraphilic behavior can be traced to adolescence.

A 15-year old boy was brought by his parents with a history of collecting female undergarments and wearing them for the past 6 months. He had recurrent thoughts about the undergarments and an urge to pick them up whenever he saw them, either in his own house or their neighbors. He had been wearing them secretly until he was caught by his mother wearing five panties beneath his dress. On further enquiry, he admitted pursuing these activities solely for pleasure, but denied any other sexual activity following cross-dressing. These recurrent thoughts about undergarments had a compulsive character. He tried to suppress these thoughts and was partly successful, until he saw undergarments in their neighborhood. He would pick them up and wear them or throw them in fear of discovery. He was caught once stealing them and was beaten by people, but he still continued these activities.

He was diagnosed as having transvestic fetishism and was prescribed escitalopram, 10 mg/day. He showed significant improvement after four weeks, with a decrease in recurrent thoughts and urges to pick up clothes.

Most of the cases of transvestic fetishism do not turn up for treatment and are discovered accidentally, as is in this case. There are no well established drugs for treatment of transvestic fetishism, and only case reports of successful treatment with buspirone (Fedoroff, 1988; Fedoroff, 1991), fluoxetine (Jorgensen, 1990), sertraline and lithium (Rubenstein

and Engel, 1996) are published. Fluoxetine has been used in treatment of other paraphilias (Emmanuel et al., 1991; Perilstein et al., 1991; Kafka and Prentky, 1992).

Stein et al. (1992) hypothesized that obsessions and compulsions are at the compulsive end and paraphilias are at the impulsive end of a neurobiological spectrum and discussed the use of serotonergic medications in the treatment of sexual obsessions and paraphilias. Abdo et al. (2001) have reported two cases in which transvestism was OCD-related and suggested that in those whose cross-dressing was more egodystonic responded better to treatment. In the case described above, the boy had strong urge to collect and wear the undergarments, which had a compulsive quality. There may be a subset of cases of transvestic fetishism, which lie in the OCD-transvestism continuum, who may have dysregulation of serotonergic neurons, and these group of patients may respond preferentially to SSRIs.

References

- Abdo CH, Hounie A, de Tubino Scanavino M, Miguel EC. OCD and transvestism: is there a relationship? *Acta Psychiatr Scand.* 2001;103(6):471-473.
- Emmanuel NP, Lydiard RB, Ballenger JC. Fluoxetine treatment of voyeurism (letter). *Am J Psychiatry.* 1991;148:950.
- Fedoroff JP. Buspirone hydrochloride in the treatment of an atypical paraphilia. *Arch Sex Behav.* 1992;21(4):401-6.

- Fedoroff JP. Buspirone hydrochloride in the treatment of transvestic fetishism. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 1988; 49(10): 408-9.
- Jorgensen VT. Cross-dressing successfully treated with fluoxetine. *N Y State J Med*. 1990;90:566-7.
- Kafka MP, Prentky R. Fluoxetine treatment of nonparaphilic sexual addictions and paraphilias in men. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. 1992;53(10):351-8.
- Perilstein RD, Lipper S, Friedman LJ. Three cases of paraphilia responsive to Fluoxetine treatment. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 1991;52:169-170.
- Rubenstein EB, Engel NL. Successful treatment of transvestic fetishism with sertraline and lithium. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 1996;57(2):92.
- Stein DJ, Hollander E, Anthony DT, et al. Serotonergic medications for sexual obsessions, sexual addictions and paraphilias. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 1992;53:267-271