ROLE OF PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN CONVERSION DISORDER TREATMENT

ADAM MEIROSE
PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW

• Barb Leymaster, PT, MPT, GCS
• Seward Memorial Physical Therapy
CONVERSION DISORDER

- Formerly known as Functional Neurological Disorder
- Two to three times more common in females
- Often associated with dissociative symptoms
  - Depersonalization, derealization, and dissociative amnesia
DSM – 5 DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

- One or more symptoms of altered voluntary motor or sensory function.
- Clinical findings provide evidence of incompatibility between the symptom and recognized neurological or medical conditions.
- The symptom or deficit is not better explained by another medical or mental disorder.
- The symptom or deficit causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning or warrants medical evaluation.
WHY CONVERSION DISORDER?

- Common psychological abnormalities seen by physical therapists:
  - Bipolar, Depression, Anxiety
- Conversion Disorder may slip through the cracks when determining possible presence of disorder
- Treatment is based on the described and physical symptoms
  - If something is not visible or told, it is difficult to plan treatment
- By determining origin of symptoms, a physical therapist can properly administer treatment
Difficulties for Physical Therapist

- Unable to diagnose any psychological disorder
- Must remain open to mindset of patient
  - Patients truly believe they have the physical symptoms they report
  - Be conscious of the symptoms but aware of the inconsistencies
  - The lack of organic origin of symptoms leads to confusion on how to plan and progress treatment
- Diagnosis should be based on the overall clinical picture and not on a single clinical finding
SAMPLE INCONSISTENCIES

- Requiring large amounts of assistance
- Legs do not demonstrate atrophy due to prolonged demobilization
- Movement of hip and knee to remove shoe but unable to move during testing
- Sensory responses to pinprick do not follow a particular dermatome pattern
GOALS FOR TREATMENT

- Multidisciplinary approach is needed for successful treatment
  - Physical Therapists works with physicians, psychiatrists, and clinical psychologists

Short Term
- Use structured rehabilitation for reducing symptoms

Long Term
- Independent ambulation
- Return to normal function after treatment process
CONCLUSION

- Physical Therapists are important members of the treatment team involved in the diagnosis and treatment of a patient with conversion disorder.
- Unable to diagnosis the disorder on their patient, but can assist in the diagnosis by performing various tests:
  - Manual Muscle Tests
  - Nerve Conduction Tests
- Can guide the patient’s return to normal physical function.
REFERENCES


