



MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

In This Issue: Fregoli Syndrome



What is Fregoli Syndrome?

Fregoli delusion, also known as the *delusion of doubles* is a rare disorder in which a person holds a delusional belief that different people are in fact disguised as their friend, relative, loved one or caregiver. In the majority of cases the delusion is of a paranoid nature whereby this person disguised as someone well known to the patient means the patient great harm and seeks to persecute them.

Living with Fregoli Syndrome

Fregoli syndrome was first described in 1927 in a woman who thought her favorite actresses were disguising themselves as her friends, her employers and family. The doctors named the condition after Italian entertainer Leopold Fregoli who famously did impersonations of contemporary political figures.

There is a case of a patient with schizophrenia who developed Frégoli syndrome while using social networking Web sites. A person with the Fregoli delusion can also inaccurately recall places, objects, and events. Their rigid, inflexible cognitions help them establish inaccurate accounts and personal history that gives them some level of assurance that what they are claiming is rationale.

This disorder though rare can cause a complete disruption of the sufferers life as well as those that care for them including their family. Due to their distrust and paranoia the patient will reject those same persons that love them and care for them.

Symptoms of Fregoli Syndrome

- **Delusions** (especially paranoid that a persecutor is disguised as a person or persons that are known and familiar to the patient)
- **Visual memory deficit**
- **Deficit in self-monitoring**
- **Deficit in self-awareness**
- **Hallucinations**
- **Deficit in executive functions** (unable to work towards goals and manage thoughts, behaviors or feelings)
- **Deficit in cognitive flexibility** (unable and unwilling to consider other ideas or thoughts from others despite the evidence presented, includes inability to correct their own thinking errors regardless of results)
- **History of seizure activity**
- **History of Traumatic Brain Injury to left temporo-parietal and right frontal areas of the brain.**

Causes and Treatment of Fregoli Syndrome

Causes may include but are not limited to:

Levodopa treatment: Levodopa, also known as L-DOPA, is clinically used to treat Parkinson's disease and dopamine-responsive dystonia. Clinical studies have shown that the use of levodopa can lead to visual hallucinations and delusions. In most patients, delusions were more prominent than hallucinations. With prolonged use of levodopa, the delusions dominate the patient's attention. It has been concluded that delusions related to anti-Parkinson's medications are one of the leading causes of Fregoli syndrome.

Traumatic brain injury: Injury to the right frontal and left temporo-parietal areas of the brain can cause Fregoli syndrome. After such injuries significant deficits in executive and memory functions soon follow. Tests performed on patients that have suffered from these types of brain injuries revealed that basic attention ability and visuomotor processing speed are typically normal. However, these patients showed deficits in their ability to govern their responses to the world around them and deficits to their inhibitions. The result of such deficits created issues in perception and reasoning.

Treatment

Antipsychotic medication is generally used to treat Fregoli delusions. Anti-seizure drugs and antidepressants are prescribed to combat other symptoms of the disorder. The family members of the patient are also counseled so they do not feel insulted by the patient's behavior. Individualized cognitive therapy is much more effective when the therapy does not constantly correct or contradict the patient's delusional content. Doing so only serves to raise the levels of paranoia.

REFERENCES

The GCSO Mental Health Task Force encourages you to utilize the sources listed below and the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* at www.samhsa.gov to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.

Diagnostic Statistical Manual –5, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC. June 2013

<https://www.thecarlatreport.com/articles/4171-whos-who-a-review-of-delusional-misidentification-syndromes>

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