

Apotemnophilia- "Love of Amputation"

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Abstract

Apotemnophilia, also known as body integrity identity disorder or amputee identity disorder, is most likely a neurologic disorder in which a person has the overwhelming desire to amputate healthy parts of their body. In extreme cases, sufferers amputate their own limbs or ask others to do this for them. Because few surgeons are willing to amputate healthy limbs, patients often attempt to irrevocably damage the limb in question themselves, necessitating formal amputation. After amputation, most report to being happy with their decision. Apotemnophilia is thought to be related to right parietal lobe damage, as the disorder has features in common with somatoparaphrenia, a type of monothematic delusion secondary to parietal lobe injury where the afflicted person denies ownership of a limb or an entire side of one's body. The major problem in providing treatment is that most people with apotemnophilia do not seek professional treatment for their condition. Cognitive behavioral and aversion therapies have been tried.

Keywords: Apotemnophilia; Amputation; Parietal Lobe Injury.

Introduction

Apotemnophilia or body integrity image disorder. In this disorder, otherwise sane and rational individuals express a strong and specific desire for the amputation of a healthy limb or limbs. Most date this desire to their childhood and not uncommonly the sufferer will attempt to obtain amputation of the specific limb. As few surgeons are willing to amputate healthy limbs, this often means that the patient themselves will attempt to irrevocably damage the limb in question, thus necessitating formal amputation. After amputation most report to being happy with their decision and often state, paradoxically, that they are 'complete' at last. The disorder has long been regarded as being purely psychological in origin. It has been argued that it might be a 'cry for attention' or a sexual paraphilia although why it should take this particular form is not clear. Others have proposed that seeing an amputee at a young age has caused this to be somehow 'imprinted' onto the sufferer's psyche as the 'ideal body image'. Bizarrely, it has even been suggested that the supposed phallic resemblance of

an amputee's stump is the underlying motivator.

Types

Bruno has identified three groups within the larger community of people obsessed with amputation:

- ❖ "Pretenders" use wheelchairs, crutches and other devices to make people think they are disabled.
- ❖ "Devotees" are sexually attracted to people with amputations and disabled people, and will often search for them on the Internet.
- ❖ "Wannabes," who get the most attention, live for the removal of their healthy limbs.

John Money, a psychologist and sexuality expert at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, gave the disorder its name in 1977 and declared that people with the disorder have a sexual fetish centered on amputated limbs. Apotemnophilia has also been linked to obsessive-compulsive disorder and homosexuality.

Causes

- ♦ Psychologically based condition in which an individual has a fantasy of having a missing limb. Because of this fantasy, an individual may opt to have a voluntary amputation in order to achieve this ideal image of themselves. This idealized notion of having a missing limb is persistent and often times will preoccupy the

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individual seeking the amputation

- ◆ Right parietal lobe damage
- ◆ Abnormalities in the prefrontal cortex
- ◆ Congenital dysfunction of the right superior parietal lobule and its connection with the insula to form a coherent sense of body image

Management

Cognitive and behavior therapy to modified to change patterns of behavior and fetishes Aversion therapy Aversive conditioning to deviant sexual fantasies include training in social skills that may help maintain the deviant sexual arousal and behavioral patterns.

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