

## Chapter 5 Psychosomatic Diseases

### Section 1 Introduction

#### 1. Definition of Psychosomatic Diseases

Psychosomatic diseases are also called psychosomatic disorders or psychophysiological diseases. It refers to a kind of diseases mainly based on somatic symptoms, but psychosocial factors also play an important role in the occurrence and development of such diseases.

#### 2. Morbidity Rate and Population Characteristics of Psychosomatic Diseases

Female morbidity rate of psychosomatic diseases is generally higher than the rate in males, with a ratio of 3 to 2. However, Specific disease entities such as coronary heart disease have higher case rate in men than in women. For people younger than 15 in child population and older than 65 in elderly population, the case rate is the lowest; for people in adolescence period and middle-aged period, the rate shows a rising trend; for people in climacteric period and presenium, the sickness rate is the highest. In addition, different social environment could also result in different morbidity rates.

#### 3. Range of Psychosomatic Diseases

medical psychosomatic diseases; surgical psychosomatic diseases; gynecological psychosomatic diseases; pediatric psychosomatic diseases; ophthalmic psychosomatic diseases; oral psychosomatic diseases; ear-nose-throat psychosomatic diseases; skin psychosomatic diseases; other diseases such as cancer, obesity etc.;

### Section 2 Pathogenic Mechanism of Psychosomatic Diseases

#### 1. Psychodynamic Theory

Psychodynamic theory gives emphasis on the role of subconscious psychological conflicts in the occurrence of psychosomatic diseases. It believes the subconscious characteristics of special individuals could decide certain psychosomatic diseases caused by psychological conflicts. The three factors which can result in the occurrence of psychosomatic diseases are as follows: unresolved psychological conflict; fragile organ and hyperfunction of sympathetic nervous system.

#### 2. Psychophysiological Theory

The research of psychophysiology shows that psychoneural intermediary approaches, psychoneural endocrine approaches and psychoneural immunology approaches are the psychoneural intermediary mechanism through which psychosocial factors may result in psychosomatic diseases.

### 3. Learning Theory

Learning theory believes that certain social environment could induce individual learned psychological and physiological responses which are presented as emotional stress, quicken respiration, elevated blood pressure, etc. These learned psychological and physiological responses could soon be enhanced and developed into symptoms and diseases because of problems existed in individual qualities.

### 4. Comprehensive Pathogenic Mechanism of Psychosomatic Diseases

Current researches of psychosomatic diseases are not restricted to one school, but are the organic integration of psychodynamics, psychophysiology and learning theory.

## Section 3 Common Psychosomatic Diseases

### 1. Essential Hypertension

Psychological influencing factors of essential hypertension include various negative emotional states, certain character traits and some unfavorable psychological stress reactions, such as regular emotional stress. Social factors include social structure, political status, economic condition, occupational division of labor, some social life events, etc.

### 2. Coronary Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease

The occurrence and development of coronary heart disease are related to many biological, psychological and social factors, including inheritance, hypertension, hyperlipemia, smoking, obesity, inadequate activity amount, type A behavior pattern, uncoordinated social relations, anxiety and depression, and other so called “risk factors” of coronary heart disease.

### 3. Bronchial Asthma

Etiological factors of bronchial asthma are more complicated, which are related to immunity, infection, endocrine, autonomic nerve, biochemical and psychological

factors. It is believed recently that although an isolated psychological factor cannot induce bronchial asthma, emotion is still an important simulating factor.

#### 4. Peptic Ulcer

The formation of peptic ulcer is related to life events, and personality features and behavior patterns to a certain degree. Patients of peptic ulcer usually desire to excel over others, and cannot tolerate any slack.

#### 5. Diabetes

Etiological factors of diabetes can be classified into genetic factors and environmental factors. Genetic factors play a major role in the occurrence of type II diabetes, while environmental factors are the important simulating factors for inducing type I diabetes on the basis of genetic background. Research shows that personalities of diabetic patients are more introverted, more passive, and not easily agitated, which in some others' opinion, is related to type A character.

#### 6. Cancer

Cancer is a multicausal disease. Although etiology of cancer is too complicated to be completely understood, there have already been many researches recently showing that psychological and social factors play a part in the occurrence and transference of cancer. For example, personality characteristics (type C character) such as overcaution, carefulness, forbearance, pursuing excellence, emotion instability, being bad at unleashing negative emotion, etc. have been proved to have relations with the occurrence of cancer. Negative life events are also related to the occurrence of cancer.