**Module 8: Somatic Symptom And Related Disorders**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**8.1. Clinical Presentation**

* Describe somatic symptom and related disorders.
* Describe how somatic symptom disorder presents.
* Describe how illness anxiety disorder presents.
* Describe how functional neurological symptom (conversion) disorder presents.
* Describe how factitious disorder presents.

**8.2. Epidemiology**

* Describe the epidemiology of somatic disorders.

**8.3. Comorbidity**

* Describe the comorbidity of somatic disorders.

**8.4. Etiology**

* Describe the psychodynamic causes of somatic disorders.
* Describe the cognitive causes of somatic disorders.
* Describe the behavioral causes of somatic disorders.
* Describe the sociocultural causes of somatic disorders.

**8.5. Treatment**

* Describe treatment options for somatic disorders.

**8.6. Psychological Factors Affecting Other Medical Conditions**

* Describe how psychological factors affecting other medical conditions present.
* List and describe the most common types of psychophysiological disorders.
* Describe treatment options for psychological factors affecting other medical conditions.

KEY TERMS

**Biofeedback**: A psychological treatment where an individual is connected to a machine for continuous monitoring of involuntary physiological reactions such as heart rate, muscle tension, and body temperature. It is often used for managing pain and headaches unresponsive to pharmacological interventions​​.

**Catastrophic Thinking**: Negative beliefs or exaggerated fears of physiological sensations, leading individuals to overanalyze and interpret their symptoms negatively, often fearing the worst possible outcomes​​.

**Central Sensitivity Syndromes (CSSs)**: These are physical disorders characterized by central sensitization symptoms but medically unexplained. They include conditions like fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, and chronic fatigue syndrome, with a high comorbidity rate with somatic pain disorder​​.

**External Motivators**: In the context of somatic disorders, external motivators refer to the benefits an individual might gain from their physical symptoms, such as attention, sympathy, financial assistance, or psychiatric disability​​.

**Factitious Disorder**: Not defined in the provided text.

**Functional Neurological Symptom (Conversion) Disorder**: Not defined in the provided text.

**Group Therapy**: Not specifically defined in the provided text, but generally it is a form of psychotherapy where multiple patients meet to discuss and work on shared issues under the guidance of a therapist.

**Hypnosis**: Not specifically defined in the provided text, but it is often used as a form of therapy that involves guided relaxation and focused attention to achieve an altered state of consciousness, allowing individuals to explore painful thoughts, feelings, and memories they might have hidden from their conscious minds.

**Illness Anxiety Disorder**: A disorder involving excessive preoccupation with having or acquiring a serious medical illness, without typically presenting with any somatic symptoms. This disorder is driven by the fear of acquiring an illness rather than the presence of actual physical symptoms​​.

**Internal Motivators**: In the context of somatic symptom disorders, these are the benefits that protect an individual from anxiety or emotional symptoms/conflicts, often expressed through physical symptoms like pain or headaches​​.

**Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**: A chronic functional disorder of the gastrointestinal tract, characterized by symptoms like abdominal pain and extreme bowel habits (diarrhea or constipation), affecting up to a quarter of the population​​.

**Migraines**: A type of headache characterized by severe throbbing pain usually on one side of the head, often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, and vertigo. Migraines are believed to be caused by changes in blood flow to parts of the brain​​.

**Primary Gain**: The benefit derived from somatic symptoms that provides protection from anxiety or emotional symptoms, usually expressed via physical symptoms like pain or headaches​​.

**Psychophysiological Disorders:** Physical illnesses or conditions that are influenced or exacerbated by psychological factors, including stress, emotional states, or maladaptive behaviors. These disorders encompass a range of medical conditions, such as hypertension, migraines, and gastrointestinal issues, where psychological processes significantly affect the body's functioning and symptomatology.

**Reinforcers**: In the context of behavioral theory, reinforcers are rewards that individuals with significant somatic symptoms receive, which may include attention from others or financial benefits like disability payments​​.

**Relaxation Training**: A technique that teaches individuals to relax their muscles on command, used in combination with other psychological interventions to reduce anxiety and effectively treat physical symptoms like headaches and chronic pain​​.

**Secondary Gain**: The external benefits or experiences an individual gains from their physical symptoms, such as attention, sympathy, or financial assistance​​.

**Somatic Symptom Disorder**: A disorder where individuals present with multiple somatic symptoms significant enough to impact daily functioning. These symptoms can be localized or diffused and specific or nonspecific, with a lack of medical explanation not necessary for diagnosis​​.

**Tension Headaches**: Headaches characterized by a dull, constant ache, often localized to one part of the head or neck. They are believed to be primarily caused by stress, in response to sustained muscle contraction​​.

**Ulcers**: Painful sores in the stomach lining, often caused by a reduction in mucus from digestive juices, allowing digestive acids to damage the lining. Stress is believed to play a role in their development and exacerbation​​.