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Seminar 7. Consciousness: Disorders of Screening and Attention

GENERAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

For Residents in Psychiatry

Eight Seminars

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CONSCIOUSNESS: DISORDERS OF SCREENING AND ATTENTION

Seventh Seminar

CONSCIOUSNESS: ORIGINAL DEFINITION

In psychic (mental) life everything is connected with everything else and each element is colored by the state and content within which it occurs.

An analysis of an individual case cannot consist simply in breaking up the situation into its elements but needs to have a constant referral to the psychic state as a whole.

JASPERS (1913): Refers to the "state of consciousness" as the "momentary whole" of the "psychic state."

CONSCIOUSNESS: CURRENT DEFINITION

State of Awareness of the **SELF** and the **ENVIRONMENT**.

One may distinguish the **CONTENT** of consciousness from the
ACTIVITY of consciousness which entails the functions of:

SCREENING
INTEGRATION

DISORDERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Disorders of consciousness are manifest in the following states of consciousness:

- a. LOWERED (depressed)
- b. HEIGHTENED (expanded)
- c. CLOUDED (dream-like)
- d. RESTRICTED (narrowed)

LOWERED CONSCIOUSNESS

Lowered consciousness is experienced as a rise in the threshold of incoming stimuli resulting in a situation in which patients respond poorly or not at all to environmental contingents.

Level of awareness, are:

- BENOMENHEIT
- SOMNOLENCE
- SOPOR (TORPOR)
- PRECOMA
- COMA

CLOUDED CONSCIOUSNESS

Clouded consciousness may be displayed in 1 of 3 forms:

ONEROID STATE	Dream-like state of consciousness. Seen in: Bouffee delirante oneirophrenia Physical illness Induced by tea or coffee
SUBACUTE DELIRIOUS STATE	Confusional state with incoherence of thinking and disintegration of mental faculties. Seen in: Toxic confusional state Senescence (Sundowner) Senility (PDDAT, MID)
DELIRIUM	Inability to distinguish between mental images and perceptions; illusions, hallucinations with severe anxiety and restlessness (more severe at night). Seen in: Symptomatic psychoses Organic dementias

NARROWED CONSCIOUSNESS

Break in the continuity of consciousness with restriction of what enters into consciousness.

Seen in: HYSTERIA
 EPILEPSY

The two closely related forms of narrowed consciousness are:

Break in continuity
Ordered twilight state
 TWILIGHT STATE
 FUGUE STATE

MORPHOLOGY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

LATERAL LEMNISCAL PATHWAYS	conduction of sensory impulses which contribute to perception, recognition, localization and qualitative discrimination of stimuli
MEDIAL LEMNISCAL PATHWAYS (Ascending Reticular System)	Screening incoming information and integration of incoming information with continuously changing background of internal (somatic) and external (environmental) data Initiation and maintenance of conscious state

DRUGS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

ANTICHOLINERGIC DRUGS

Atropine

Produce manifestations related to integrative function of consciousness:
 Mental disintegration
 Toxic confusional state
 Delirium

CHOLINERGIC DRUGS

Physostigmine

Corrects atropine-induced disintegration

SEDATIVES

Barbiturates

Decreases arousal reaction to peripheral and direct stimuli
 Decrease arousal reaction to peripheral stimuli only

NEUROLEPTICS

Chlorpromazine

Increase of screening function

SCHIZOPHRENIA: Favorable effect
 NORMAL: somnolence
 SENILITY: Confusion

ATTENTION: DEFINITION

The field of clear consciousness within the total conscious state is termed the
FIELD OF ATTENTION

constellation of consciousness in which sensorial perceptions are foremost

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE ATTENTION

Active

Purposeful Focusing
on some
External or Internal Event

Passive

one or Another Object
Becomes
Center of Consciousness Spontaneously

Diminished

Diminished Ability to Maintain
and
Focus Attention on Topic

Decreased

Attention
Wanders from
one Object to Another

Distractable

Diminished active
or
Decreased passive
Attention

DISORDERS OF ATTENTION

Disorders of attention are displayed in one or more of the following variables:

CONCENTRATION	Ability to exclude all associations irrelevant to a certain theme
Disturbance	Inability to focus on a topic and remain focused
TENACITY	Ability to keep one's attention focused on a certain subject continuously
Disturbance	Decreased ability to keep one's attention focused on a certain subject Decreased ability to distract one's attention from a certain subject Ability to direct one's attention to a new subject
VIGILANCE	
Disturbance	Hypervigilance Hypovigilance
	PATHOLOGY OF ATTENTION
	Hyperprosexia: hypervigilance with hypotenacity
	Hypoprosexia: hypovigilance with hypotenacity