

The biological approach to treating OCD



Learning objective:
To outline and
evaluate the use of
drug therapy as a
treatment for OCD

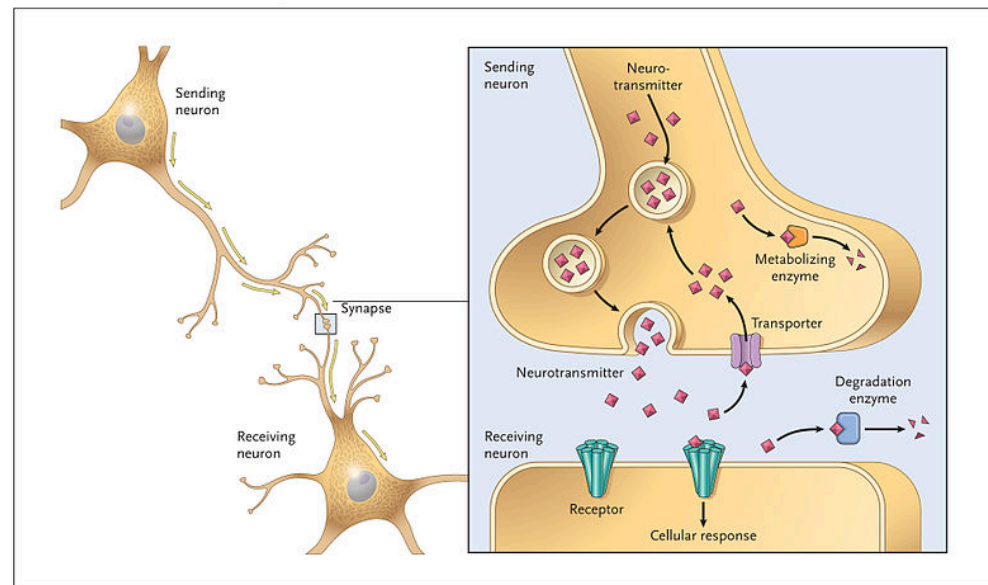
Synaptic transmission

Neurotransmitter (serotonin) is released by the presynaptic neuron

The neurotransmitter travels across a synapse (gap between the two neurons)

The neurotransmitter conveys a message from the presynaptic neuron to the postsynaptic neuron where it is broken down and re-used

Generic Neurotransmitter System



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Drug therapy for psychological disorders aims to restore the chemical imbalance

SSRIs (antidepressants) are used to treat OCD

Serotonins are released by certain neurons in the brain.

SSRIs prevent the reabsorption and breakdown of serotonin effectively increases its levels in the synapse (gap between the pre and post synaptic neuron) and continue to stimulate the post synaptic neuron

It takes 3-4 months of daily use for SSRIs to have much impact on symptoms

Common SSRIs include:

- citalopram
- clomipramine
- escitalopram
- fluoxetine
- fluvoxamine
- paroxetine
- sertraline

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKDxglSWovA>

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Combining SSRIs with other treatments

Drugs are often combined with CBT to treat OCD

Drugs reduce the emotional symptoms- anxiety and depression

This allows them to effectively engage with CBT

In practice some respond better to CBT alone, whilst others respond better to drug therapy alone.

Occasionally other drugs are prescribed alongside SSRIs

Alternatives to SSRIs

Where SSRIs have not been effective for 3-5 months the dosage may be increased or it can be combined with other drugs.

Tricyclics (older type of antidepressants)- Clomipramine, same effect on serotonin system as SSRIs, with more severe side effects

SNRIs- increase serotonin and noradrenaline

Is drug therapy effective?	Is drug therapy appropriate?	Is drug therapy ethical?
<p data-bbox="108 129 641 205">Supporting evidence drug therapy is effective</p> <p data-bbox="108 262 641 872">Soomor et al (2009) reviewed studies comparing SSRIs to placebos in the treatment of OCD and concluded that all 17 studies reviewed showed significantly better results for the SSRIs than for placebo conditions. Typically symptoms decline in 70% of patients when on SSRIs. It is also worth noting that effectiveness is greater when SSRIs are combined with CBT. The remaining 30% of patients respond to combine or alternative drug treatment.</p> <p data-bbox="108 929 641 1272">This validates drug therapy as an effective treatment for OCD however it is important to note that it is more effective when combined with CBT. For this reason patients should be offered both as a treatment option depression</p>		<p data-bbox="1263 129 1798 611">Patients must fully understand and give consent to their treatment. Patients should be directed to read the possible side effects and given clear directions on how and when to take the medication. It is also important to remind patients that non-compliance will however effect the management of their symptoms and possible make them relapse..</p>

Is drug therapy ineffective?

There is evidence to suggest that drug therapy may be ineffective for numerous reasons including

You will usually need to take an SSRI for **12 weeks** before you notice any benefit. Most people with moderate to severe OCD need to take one for at least **12 months**. People with more severe OCD, however, may need to take the medication for **many years** to prevent the condition recurring.

Many sufferers say that even though the drugs control their feelings, the obsessive thoughts and compulsions are still 'there in the background'

The relapse rate is high (up to 45% of sufferers go 'back' after finishing medication – Simpson, 2004)

There are side effects for most drug treatments including, Headaches; Feeling agitated; Shaky; Feeling sick; constipation; dry mouth; blurred vision; loss of sex drive; erection problems; weight gain and tremors. These side effects may be a concern for some patients and result in non-compliance with their treatment and ultimately relapse; additionally compliance could result in a secondary disorder which may also need treatment.

Homework

1. Consolidation cards; OCD explanations, OCD-treatments