

SPA/APPA 2021 Virtual Meeting Medical Student/Resident Poster Presentation

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Abstract Title: A unique presentation of Misidentification Syndrome, a syndrome of subjective doubles

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Introduction/Background: The syndrome of subjective doubles is a rare form of delusional misidentification syndrome. It describes a person who believes they have a clone, double, or doppelgänger. The syndrome belongs to a group of disorders including: Capgras' syndrome, Frégoli syndrome, and intermetamorphosis syndrome; all psychopathologic phenomena that occur primarily in the setting of psychosis in Schizophrenia. In Capgras Syndrome, the patient expresses the belief that familiar persons have been replaced by clones. These conditions form a syndrome due to their tendency to co-occur and interchange, and their basic theme is the concept of the double. It has been determined that these syndromes arise from a change in the way the brain processes visual signals, specifically the ability to recognize familiar faces. These delusions have been shown to exist upon face-to-face interaction and subsequently resolve during telephone communications.

Description: Here we present the case of a 26-year-old male who presented after an acute decompensation and worsening of psychotic features for an involuntary evaluation. The patient reported visualizing several identical replicas of himself. Despite seeing these replicas numerous times, the patient did not express fear of harm by these doubles and noted they often did not speak to him. For example, the patient reported that the 2 officers who detained him prior to hospital admission both appeared and sounded identical to himself. The patient also expressed the delusion that his mother had been replaced. He believed his mother was cloned and reported a great number of different identical clones. These delusions appeared to be fixed and persisted at the end of inpatient evaluation.

Discussion and Conclusion: This case highlights a combination of the syndrome of subjective doubles and Capgras syndrome where the patient has delusions regarding self and others. It is particularly interesting as it illustrates the tendency of these delusions to occur simultaneously. It is atypical that this patient had the impression that he was being pursued by his doubles, as patients with this syndrome historically believe their "doppelgänger" leads an entirely separate life. This showcases the presentations that medical students and clinicians should recognize to identify and manage patients with this rare symptom of psychosis.

References:

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