

Discuss the biological treatments of OCD (16)

The biological treatment of OCD refers to drug therapy that helps increase or decrease neurochemicals in the brain.

One type of treatment is called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) which is an antidepressant drug that prevents over binding over neurochemicals resulting in OCD. A synaptic transmission occurs when electrical impulses (excitation or inhibition) travels down pre synapse encouraging neurotransmitters to be expelled into synapse. The neurotransmitter –serotonin in this case- binds to the receptors on the post synapse yet sometimes there is excess levels of neurochemicals that will continue to bind which can cause an imbalance. This is how SSRIs are effective as they prevent the excess serotonin binding by acting as an inhibitor this therefore reuptakes an excess and avoids problems such as OCD. SSRIs take approximately 3-4 months to reduce symptoms yet have impact on the brain rather quickly.

When SSRIs are not effective alternatives are proposed such as Tricyclics that act the same way as SSRIs yet have more side effects. Another option is SNRIs which also work in the same way as SSRIs but increase the levels of the noradrenaline chemical too which may not be desired. These options aid in the reduction of symptoms of OCD but sometimes this is not enough so CBT is combined with drugs which help emotional symptoms.

Benzodiazepines (BZs) are also used to treat OCD as it is an anxiety disorder these are called anti-anxiety drugs that enhances the GABA that instructs neurons stop firing or to start which reduces anxiety levels by encouraging obsessive thoughts to stop.

Drug therapies such as SSRIs and Tricyclics are praised for being effective as research found 70% of patients with OCD had improved there symptoms showing they are effective from such a high percentage. Yet this is challenged as 30% are not responding to treatment suggesting there is other explanations for OCD not just biological decreasing the accuracy of treatment.

Furthermore, SSRIs are challenged for being unethical because it can encourage drug dependency or addiction as people may feel they cannot function without the medication therefore CBT may be a better treatment as it is a talking based therapy that does not involve medication so is seen as more ethical. Despite this, professionals favour medication as it is cost effective and works rather quickly as symptoms take 3-4 months to reduce it has quick impact on the brain which is more effective than CBT. Some medications that aid in reducing symptoms of OCD have negative side effects such as tricyclics such as blurred vision and a drop in blood pressure. Therefore, may be causing more harm than good which leads to the fact CBT may be a better alternative as it does not encourage any harm.

The effectiveness of drug therapy such as SSRIs and Tricyclics is questioned as some cases of OCD can be triggered from the environment meaning it is not due to biology and neural imbalances. Therefore, drugs that aim to reduce imbalances of serotonin will not be effective and a behavioural treatment may be more suited to unlearn compulsions. Another disadvantages is the research into drug therapy as it is sponsored by drug companies therefore results are not genuine as they are contaminated with bias producing inaccurate support for drug therapy in treating OCD.

Soomro et al(2008) found that SSRIs were more effective than placebos supporting the use of biological treatments as improvements made. This is credible support in demonstrating OCD is biological as the biological treatments are working, Soomro's study has great temporal validity as it was conducted only 10 years which is fairly recent so is representative and can be applied to 2018.