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Abstract

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Pain as narrative: an integrated approach between narrative medicine and psychotherapy

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION

The idea of this clinical work starts from the observation of several cases of patients with psychosomatic disorders, observing how these disorders often represent a real form of "psychic narration" of the subject and his own history.

METHODS

In this work we intend to talk about "pain as narration", of mental pain and its transposition in the body and on the body in terms of narration and narrative plot in an integrated approach between narrative medicine and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. We will show how the body can become, through somatic representations, not only theater but a real "narrative plot" of the story of an individual, of experiences, of one's emotions and of aspects hidden by the individual from himself in particular through the case of a patient with interstitial cystitis.

CLINICAL CASE AND RESULTS

Vania is a 43-year-old woman with a medical diagnosis of chronic interstitial cystitis. For the past 10 years, she has regularly taken the prescribed pharmacological therapies and the clinical protocols to which she is inserted, with the chronic recurrence of the problem. Married, with two teenage daughters, a bank employee. (...). Vania is the eldest of 4 children. From an early age she had to take on the burden of supporting her brothers due to the serious problems relating to a violent and alcoholic father and a severely depressed mother who was in charge of the reference structures. (...). The therapeutic work will take into consideration the "narrative" dimension of the body as an expression of Vania's story, trying to work the body areas involved as a "narrative symbolic text" of an ancient and profound story that has "embedded" itself in the patient and does not find space to "flow". The patient's "emotional waters" seem to remain stagnant, blocking her from within in a dimension of guilt and experiences of impossibility to be happy and deserving of the tiring life she has built today, of what she is today as a woman, mother, wife and worker. (.....) The patient was "in the body" and appeared to exist only as a "body" that became the language of a story of mental and emotional pain, narrated through the bodily pain of interstitial cystitis. (.....) Cystitis seemed to constantly remind Vania that she belongs to "that history of deprivation and violence", bringing her back to an apparently evocative and even punitive dimension for having differentiated herself from an original context still fixed in those logics and in that immutable history except through the death of the father and the maternal depression also evocative of deadly aspects.

CONCLUSIONS

(...) Symbolically, as it is possible to observe in the case of Vania and not only in this one, cystitis therefore represents a conflict between accepting and not accepting to let life flow. Cystitis revolves around the theme of letting the waters flow, of not retaining the residues of the metabolism, of allowing oneself the necessary compliance to make things happen spontaneously. Cystitis, in terms of narrative and symbolic medicine, narrates the inability of the subject who suffers from it to access these areas. (,,,) At the medical checks Vania was absolutely improved and the pharmacological therapy was greatly simplified and it seems she could gradually go into remission.

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