INTRODUCTION

- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the physical and mental health of people around the world.
- Emerging evidence shows COVID-19 being associated with the development of psychiatric disorders.1-3
- Cotard’s Syndrome is a rare illness in which the patient experiences a nihilistic delusion, such as not existing or not having certain body parts.4
- Unipolar depression and bipolar depression are the most associated psychiatric conditions.5
- True prevalence is unknown, with some studies of psychiatric populations suggesting prevalence of 0.57%-0.62%.6,7
- Cotard’s Syndrome has been associated with various neurologic conditions, including migraines.4,5
- In this case, we discuss a patient with no previous psychiatric history who developed Cotard’s Syndrome after COVID-19 infection.

CASE PRESENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January/February 2022</td>
<td>Patient reported having COVID-19</td>
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<td>June 2022</td>
<td>Patient endorsed anxiety symptoms to PCP, started on escitalopram.</td>
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<td>February-May 2022</td>
<td>Patient with multiple emergency room and primary care visits for various symptoms believed to be related to post-COVID, including chest pain, shortness of breath, and headaches</td>
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<td>July 2022</td>
<td>September 2022 Patient switched to duloxetine due to endorsing vague paresthesias throughout her body.</td>
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<td>September 2022</td>
<td>Patient presented to the ED with anxiety and thoughts that she was dead. She endorsed thoughts that she had died or was in a coma, and she had these thoughts since June. She was diagnosed with Cotard delusion and panic disorder.</td>
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<td>October-December 2022</td>
<td>Patient experienced persistent derealization and disconnection from reality. Duloxetine was discontinued. Patient was started on risperidone and fluoxetine due to persistent delusion and mood symptoms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2023</td>
<td>Patient endorsed worsening suicidal thoughts. She agreed to go to the hospital to start ECT. However, she never went as her parents discouraged her from ECT.</td>
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PATIENT’S HISTORY

Medical History
- Hypertension
- Gastroesophageal reflux
- COVID

Psychiatric History
- No previous diagnosis
- No previous hospitalizations
- No previous hallucinations/paranoia

Family History
- No psychiatric conditions

Social History
- Denied drug use – urine drug screen in September 2022 was negative
- Education: Finished high school and a one-year certificate program

DISCUSSION

- The COVID-19 pandemic has been associated with worsening of pre-existing psychiatric conditions as well as the development of new mental health illnesses in previously healthy patients.8-10
- The goal of treatment in Cotard’s Syndrome should be to alleviate the underlying medical or psychiatric condition. Otherwise, antipsychotics, serotonin reuptake inhibitors, mood stabilizers, ECT, and psychotherapy have shown benefit.11-12
- There is evidence that the SARS-COV-2 RNA is found in various brain regions even after acute infection,13 suggesting a possible etiology for the cause of such psychiatric disorders.
- Furthermore, inflammation has been suggested as a possible etiology to psychotic disorders.14
- Further research should elucidate the mechanism of these conditions, as well as any effective strategies for prevention and treatment.

REFERENCES