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OC disorder sufferer calls drug therapy breakthrough

By BETTI SUNDRA JACHMAN
STAFF WRITER

Lois Turpel of Garden City knows all about obsessive compulsive disorder, not only is she involved with a support group, she's a longtime sufferer herself.

Some signs of the disorder, checking, cleaning, hoarding, intrusive thoughts and rituals, can become disabling. "I have a couple phone buddies who can't even leave the house," she said.

"It's a very secretive disorder," she said. Many people suffer from it for years before admitting to anyone that they have it, she said. "We hide it because we aren't crazy," she said.

She calls the use of antidepressant drugs a breakthrough for disorder sufferers. In the past people spent thousands of dollars on psychotherapy that did no good, she said.

"It's a physical disorder like diabetes," she said. Turpel, a former nurse, said she can remember a time when epilepsy was considered a mental illness and awaits the day when obsessive compulsive disorder is recognized as a physical ailment.

That will make it easier for sufferers to obtain treatment because many insurance plans don't cover mental illness, she said.

She attended a conference on the disorder in Boston March 10-12. It was sponsored by the National Obsessive Compulsive Foundation. "Many of the great authorities on the disorder were speakers there," she said.

Called the "doubting disease" in France, Turpel describes part

of the problem sufferers encounter as the brain being unable to transfer messages smoothly. "You get stuck on a thought."

Everyone has these same thoughts, but the obsessive compulsive person is unable to dismiss the thoughts.

Some sufferers are very good at hiding the symptoms. They can interrupt their rituals for the short term, and if they work, they can hide the symptoms and hold down a job, she said.

Many people feel they are the only ones with the disorder and are so relieved when they come to a support group meeting. At first they are nervous because they expect to meet a lot of "crazies," Turpel said.

"We laugh with one another, not at one another," she said.

The disorder wreaked havoc with Turpel's career. In nursing, she was taught to check medications three times. That turned into 15-30 times for her.

She says the disorder prevented her from keeping a job, but now her job is to educate people about the disorder.

She thinks her case was moderate, but she sees a genetic link. Her dad has it, her grandfather had it and now her daughter and grandson suffer from it.

Of her grandson she says "the kid was a basket case he had so much anxiety."

For children with the disorder other family members must learn how to cope as well. "Mothers get into enabling. You almost have to have a professional to tell you when it's OK to enable," she said.

Support Group
for
Obsessive
Compulsive
Disorder

• **Never Say Never**
support group meets at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Thursdays at First Baptist Church, 45000 N. Territorial, Plymouth Township. Call (313) 522-3022.

• **Another Never Say Never**
support group meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Thursdays at First United Methodist Church, 22124 Gorman, Dearborn. Call (313) 563-5200.

• **A support group for children and families** meets at 7 p.m. the fourth Monday of the month, Redeemer Baptist Church, 27300 Hoover, Warren. Call (313) 542-6009.

Family members can also come to the support group meetings. Turpel thinks the group is a "wonderful adjunct" to drug treatment. "You meet with other people who have the same bizarre symptoms."

Turpel's support group meets in Plymouth Township; and it is open to all area residents. See accompanying chart.

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why it works. He has studied depression for 20 years and sees no clear link between depression and obsessive compulsive behavior, except that some people with the disorder also suffer from depression.

It's recommended that patients stay on Zoloft for one to two years and gradually start to decrease the use of it. Some people can work their way off the medication, but some go back on the medication because the symptoms come back.

The condition is not new, al-

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though it may seem to be more prevalent in recent years. Sigmund Freud actually did one of the first studies of a case, and the condition has been described in fairly ancient texts.

But, Bielaki says, we're hearing more about it because talking about mental illness has been destigmatized.

Destigmatization happened first with depression, and now obsessive compulsive disorder and panic attacks are coming along behind, he said.

Research shows more and more

that brain chemistry may be the cause, but it's unknown what specifically causes the disorder. Heredity and genetics seem to play a part, but that doesn't explain all cases, Bielaki said.

But every single medication that works boosts serotonin in the brain.

Bielaki thinks the drug has amazing results considering how the disorder "cripples people in various ways."

"It interferes with their relationships with their family and children," he said.

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War from page 11A

longer than expected. I eventually returned to my ship, which was located in Bizerte, Tunisia. One evening while I was standing my regular watch there was a bombing raid and bomb fragments (called shrapnel) were falling nearby. One of these fragments bounced off a splinter shield and hit my hand, resulting in a cut on the back of my left hand. It was not very serious but sufficient to receive the Purple Heart.

Shortly after my return to the ship, we were given sailing orders and we sailed for Licata, Sicily.

This was the first of four invasions for me. We made many trips between North Africa and Sicily and later Taranto, Italy.

We received a series of shots; then we knew we were preparing for another invasion. This time it was Salerno, Italy. We again made many trips back and forth, and ultimately our ship was assigned to work out of Ischia (a small island near Naples).

I spent most of my liberty time with the children at an orphanage in Pozzuoli.

Again we received our shots and knew there was another invasion forthcoming. The next one was Anzio. We made many trips between Ischia and Anzio. It was during one of these trips that I was able to witness the eruption of Mount Vesuvius; this was a spectacular sight to behold.

The picture of our LST 351 was taken at Anzio and later appeared in the July 1944 issue of National Geographic magazine. We finally sailed again from North Africa, and this time our destination was England.

Our first stop being Swansea, Wales; then onto Plymouth, England. More shots and another invasion.

We loaded and ultimately sailed from Falmouth for the shores of France for the D-Day invasion at Normandy. Our ship landed at Utah Beach. Many trips were made between various ports in England and the coast of France. Then in December we set sail again for Rosneath, Scotland.

Here we decommissioned our

ship and turned it over to the British. I was put aboard a train for Liverpool and there boarded a ship bound for the United States.

It was during this time that the Battle of the Bulge took place. I spent Christmas between England and the United States. Later I became an instructor teaching recruits about becoming a sailor. Then I received instructions to report to Columbia University for officer's training. It was there for one term and the rules were changed which affected the course I could take, contrary to my wishes. I was returned to Great Lakes, from which I received my military discharge, and went back home to Grand Rapids.

It was during the Normandy invasion I received my Admiral's Commendation, basically for the treatment I was able to afford the wounded. I had considerable Red Cross training.

World War II veteran Bob Jagers, a Farmington resident, has been decorated with the Admiral's Commendation and the Purple Heart.

National teen-ager program seeks applicants for event

The 1995 Michigan National Teen-Ager Program is accepting its final round of applications for participating in the state program, June 9-10, in West Lansing at Michigan State University.

A senior winner, ages 16-18, and junior winner, ages 13-15, will be selected to compete at the na-

tional program, Aug. 6-12, Opryland USA, Nashville, Tenn.

Both state winners will receive an all-expense paid trip to the national program, a \$500 savings bond and a \$1,000 tuition scholarship to John Robert Powers School of Modeling.

The senior winner will also receive a \$500 cash scholarship to either the University of Michigan or Michigan State University, a full two-year tuition scholarship to Oklahoma City University, and full-tuition scholarship to the Arts Institute at locations throughout the United States.

The Michigan National Teen-Ager Program will be awarding more than \$50,000 in cash and tuition scholarships to various universities during the state event.

All state finalists will receive a \$200 tuition scholarship to the John Robert Powers School.

Call Margaret Lester at (817) 485-5635 or write to America's National Teen-Ager, 4745 Waterway Drive, Fort Worth, Texas 76137, to receive an application packet. Applicants should be girls between the ages of 13 and 18 prior to June 3, 1995. Final entry deadline is March 31. Finalists for the program will be judged on scholastic achievement, leadership involvement, personal interview and police-reference.

An informational meeting for selected state finalists and those interested in participating will be from 1-3 p.m. Sunday, April 2, at Michigan State University. Call (817) 485-5635.

Stash
your trash.