



Obsessive compulsive disorder symptoms predict anxiety, and vice versa

By Jessica K. Edwards

Researchers in London have studied the relationship between anxiety sensitivity (the tendency to fear anxiety symptoms) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) symptoms. Krebs and colleagues recruited >1,500 adolescent twins and siblings from the Genesis 12-19 study¹ and asked them to complete self-report questionnaires two years apart on anxiety sensitivity, obsessive-compulsive symptoms (OCS), anxiety and depression. They found that anxiety sensitivity was prospectively associated with changes in OCS, meaning that it could predict changes in OCS over a two-year period. This finding remained valid even after controlling for co-morbid anxiety and depression. This relationship was bidirectional and was largely accounted for by non-shared environmental influences (95%) rather than common genetics (5%). These data confirm previous work showing that anxiety sensitivity is a risk factor for OCS,² but also explain that experiencing OCS confers a risk for heightened anxiety sensitivity. Should these findings be replicated in larger samples, earlier intervention for OCS might lower the risk for anxiety sensitivity and anxiety disorders later in adolescence.

Referring to:

Krebs, G., Hannigan, L.J., Gregory, A.M., Rijdsdijk, F.V. & Eley, T.C. (2020), Reciprocal links between anxiety sensitivity and obsessive-compulsive symptoms in youth: a longitudinal twin study. *J. Child Psychol. Psychiatry*. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.13183.

References:

¹McAdams, T.A. et al. (2013), The Genesis 12-19 (G1219) Study: A twin and sibling study of gene-environment interplay and adolescent development in the UK. *Twin Res. Hum. Genet.* 16: 134-143. doi: 10.1017/thg.2012.83.

²Schmidt, N.B. et al. (2010), Prospective evaluation of the etiology of anxiety sensitivity: test of a scar model. *Behav. Res. Ther.* 38: 1083-1095. doi: 10.1016/s0005-7967(99)00138-2.