



## A BREVILOQUENT REVIEW ARTICLE ON “IDIOT SYNDROME”

## Nursing

<b>Dr. Balaji M S*</b>	Assistant Professor, Department of Medical Surgical Nursing, Adichunchanagiri College of Nursing, Adichunchanagiri University, B G Nagara, Karnataka, India. *Corresponding Author
<b>Ramya R</b>	Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Adichunchanagiri College of Nursing, Adichunchanagiri University, B G Nagara, Karnataka, India.
<b>Keshavamurthy C D</b>	Professor & Head, Department of Mental Health Nursing, Adichunchanagiri College of Nursing, Adichunchanagiri University, B G Nagara, Karnataka, India.
<b>Chandrashekar H C</b>	Principal & Head, Department of Community Health Nursing, Adichunchanagiri College of Nursing, Adichunchanagiri University, B G Nagara, Karnataka, India.
<b>Dipankar Maiti</b>	Nursing Tutor, Sushrutha College of Nursing, Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

## ABSTRACT

Internet uses for medical information has both its pros & cons effects. The positive effect of using internet in the field of medical information is that, it can lead to an intelligent discussion with the doctor, and can lead to early diagnosis and prevention of a harmful condition. Self-diagnosis and self-treatment by using Dr. Google may assist for some time, but occasionally it may go wrong and may affect the patient's health seriously and blindly trusting end up with invite trouble. When a person blindly trusts the information provided on the internet, and stops treatment, it is called cyberchondria, or IDIOT. Adjusting with cyberchondria requires some self-compassion and a willingness to respond in a new way to health anxiety. Professional help is accessible for those with persistent or recurrent symptoms or excessive anxiety.

## KEYWORDS

Internet Derived Information Obstruction Treatment, Cyberchondria, & MBCT.

## INTRODUCTION:

In this modern & digital era everyone is addicted with internet irrespective to the age & sex, has a smart phone, tablet or laptop. Internet uses for medical information has both its pros & cons effects. The positive effect of using internet in the field of medical information is that, it can lead to an intelligent discussion with the doctor, and can lead to early diagnosis and prevention of a harmful condition. But on the other hand, the negative effects are obstructing the treatment, treatment may go wrong, and it may affect the patient's health utterly. Presently, many people after searching in internet self-diagnose the condition and take treatment by himself before consulting the physician. But the hard truth is that the partial knowledge about any medical condition or a drug is always harmful. Self-diagnosis and self-treatment by using Dr. Google may assist for some time, but occasionally it may go wrong and may affect the patient's health seriously and blindly trusting end up with invite trouble.<sup>1</sup> People with depression or anxiety are more prone to experience cyberchondria. It is also prevalent in people who have had a loved one die.<sup>2</sup> Cyberchondria is a growing alarm among many healthcare practitioners as patients can now research any and all symptoms of a rare disease, illness or condition, and manifest a state of medical anxiety.<sup>3,4</sup>

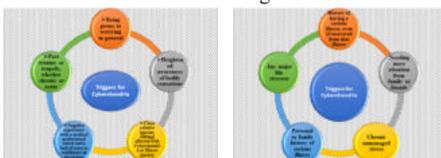
## Definition

Numerous definitions of cyberchondria have been proposed and they all include unnecessarily or repeated online searches for health-related information and anxiety about health.<sup>5</sup>

IDIOT syndrome is also recognized by means of cyberchondria, and expands with 'Internet Derived Information Obstruction Treatment'. When a person blindly trusts the information provided on the internet, and stops treatment, it is called cyberchondria, or IDIOT (Internet Derived Information Obstruction Treatment) Syndrome.<sup>1</sup>

## Causes &amp; Inductions (triggers) for Cyberchondria

Cyberchondria get triggers from various angles, ranging from single traumatic events to chronic unmanaged stress.<sup>6</sup>



## Signs of Cyberchondria

Key features of cyberchondria that the person uncertainties about having a serious illness in spite of having minimal (EMADS) or no symptoms.

**E** ---Excessive time used to search online

**M** ---Mistrust of medical professionals whose advice could be obtained in person.

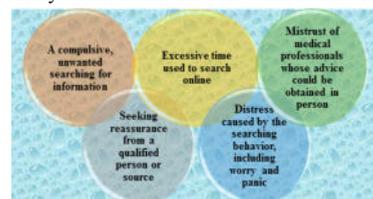
**A** ---A compulsive, unwanted searching for information

**D**---Distress caused by the searching behaviour, including worry and panic

**S**---Seeking reassurance from a qualified person or source.<sup>7</sup>

## Emblematic signs that might be experienced in cyberchondria include:

- Authentic symptoms are minor or even absent
- Spend hours together even for minor disorders
- Dreadful of having at least one number illness, and possibly several
- Searching online causes more due fear and anxiety instead of relief
- Experience an accelerated heart rate or sweating or other anxiety-related symptoms while surfing in goggle platform
- Jumped to the foulest conclusions about the current health status
- Worry excessively about the condition even suffering from minor health issues
- Found that online is accurate and truthful.
- People with cyberchondria exhibit five characteristic traits:<sup>8</sup>



## 6 Tactics for Coping with Cyberchondria

Adjusting with cyberchondria requires some self-compassion and a willingness to respond in a new way to health anxiety. Professional help is accessible for those with persistent or recurrent symptoms or excessive anxiety. In addition to considering professional help, there are a numerous coping skill that are helpful in getting through an episode of cyberchondria.

**Six coping strategies that work well for those with cyberchondria:****1. Avoid Self-Shaming**

Many individuals with cyberchondria feel uncomfortable or ashamed about their inclination to believe that they have a serious illness. This awkwardness can worsen the anxiety and even exacerbate the physical, stress-related symptoms.

**2. Be Empathetic to Yourself**

Health-related fears are more affective to make panic situation. Such fears can be difficult to understand but they are valid feelings.

**3. Practice Relaxation techniques**

Self-taught relaxation skills like deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, and muscle-tension relaxation exercises etc are much more effective to cope with Cyberchondria.

**4. Challenge thought of being ill**

Should point out the concern mainly affecting towards surfing in online & self-analysis to get rid of that.

**5. Consult with Physician**

Consult with doctor about the experienced anxiety. Should get a medical opinion if concerns persist rather than jump to conclusions about the worst-case scenarios.

**6. Realize the Bigger Picture**

Firstly, should understand about the availability of misleading information in google. Some of those are intentionally presented in a way to grab attention along with increase fear.

**When & how to seek Professional Help**

Cyberchondria can be diagnosed and treated by various healthcare professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers. The person should start with their primary care physician in order to rule out underlying physical causes. There may be a referral to a medical specialist if the physician notes any significant symptoms.

It is possible to have cyberchondria as well as a legitimate medical condition. This could occur when the person's anxiety about the medical condition is out of proportion to the seriousness of the illness.

After addressing any presenting symptoms, the primary care physician will likely refer the person to a mental health specialist. That provider will make recommendations about the form of therapy that will be helpful.

**Taking out a loving one**

When a loved one suffers from cyberchondria, it may be helpful to provide information which reduces their awkwardness about their health anxiety. Many people with cyberchondria feel shame or embarrassment which only deteriorates their level of anxiety. Getting help from a mental health provider is much better option to be accepted.

**Here are some tips for getting help for a loved one with cyberchondria:**

- Encourage to speak out actual problems
- Encourage to get help from mental health care professional
- Offer support of a skilled therapist
- remind the appointments with therapist.
- Acknowledge that online surfing is a common matter
- PEW data illustrates that 61% of the population has done some searching online.9

**Therapeutic measures for Cyberchondria & Underlying Conditions**

Research has been done to regulate the effectiveness of psychotherapy

for the symptom recognized as "health anxiety." The following are some types of therapy which have been acknowledged as effective treatments for health anxiety.

**Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)**

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) has been proved to be a useful addition to "usual services" for patients with health anxiety. Patients who taken part in MBCT in addition to usual services showed meaningfully lower health anxiety than those who received only the customary or so-called services. This enhancement was apparent immediately after treatment and also at a one-year follow-up assessment.<sup>10</sup>

**Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy**

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy is very helpful in learning to respond appropriately to harmless or ambiguous signals from one's body. Clients acquire distraction techniques to help them refocus on thoughts unrelated to their health anxiety or symptoms. They also learn relaxation techniques to manage the anxiety and its physical manifestations.<sup>11</sup>

**Pharmacotherapy**

Medications like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have been useful in dealing the obsessive thoughts involved in Cyberchondria and Anxiety Disorder. The basis for this treatment is the similarity between Cyberchondria/ Illness Anxiety Disorder and OCD. The same medications which are helpful in treating OCD may be helpful in reducing the obsessive and compulsive aspects of cyberchondria.<sup>12</sup>

**CONCLUSION:**

The first negative adverse effect of being dependant on Dr. Google is that searching for information based on symptoms can be dreadful for the emotional state. Using Google, or other tools, can feel worse and increase the anxiety level. While looking for up a disease Google surfing can also produce a second nasty adverse effect. List of possible symptoms on almost any web site can be found which can sometime cause lot of confusions. As many of the warning sign or symptoms are equitably common and will overlap with a lot of possible problems which may have nothing to do. But create panic situation and feels sicker.

**Ethical clearance-** This article is a purely a narrative review article hence it's not required an ethical clearance.

**Source of funding-** Self (review article), No financial support was provided relevant to this article.

**Conflict of Interest-** Have no conflict of interest relevant to this article.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Medical Info 4 U: IDIOT Syndrome/ Internet Derived Information Obstruction Treatment syndrome/ cyberchondria: a worldwide problem for doctors and medical professional in internet era [Internet]. [cited 2021 Sep 2]. Available from: <http://www.medicalinfo4u.com/2020/09/idiot-syndrome-internet-derived.html>
2. White R, Horvitz E. Cyberchondria: Studies of the escalation of medical concerns in Web search. *ACM Trans Inf Syst.* 2009 Sep 3;27(4):1-37.
3. Ferguson, Leila (2013-12-04). "Web research could give you a bad dose of cyberchondria". *The Conversation*. Retrieved 2017-07-20.
4. Thomas, Elizabeth (11 June 2018). "Be wary of Dr Google
5. Starcevic V, Berle D: Cyberchondria: an old phenomenon in a new guise? in Aboujaoude E, Starcevic V (eds): *Mental Health in the Digital Age: Grave Dangers, Great Promise*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp 106-117.
6. Therapedia: Illness Anxiety Disorder. Retrieved from <https://www.theravive.com/therapedia/illness-anxiety-disorder-dsm-5-300.7>
7. McElroy, E. & Shevli, M. (2014). The development and initial validation of the Cyberchondria Severity Scale (CSS). *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 28 (2), 259-265. Retrieved from [www.cyberchondria.org/cyberchondria-survey](http://www.cyberchondria.org/cyberchondria-survey)
8. Summa Health (2020, February 24). Get the Facts on Cyberchondria. Retrieved from <https://www.summahealth.org/flourish/entries/2020/02/get-the-facts-on-cyberchondria>
9. Pew Research. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2010/08/30/e-patients-cyberchondriacs-and-why-we-should-stop-calling-names/>
10. American Psychological Association (2012). A randomized clinical trial of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy versus unrestricted services for health anxiety (hypochondriasis). Retrieved from [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2270897](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2270897)
11. Williams, MJ., McManus, F., Muse, K., Williams, J.G. (2011). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for severe health anxiety (hypochondriasis): An interpretative phenomenological analysis of patients' experiences. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 1-19. Retrieved from DOI:10.1111/j.2044-8260.2010.02000.x
12. Drug.com (2014). Hypochondriasis Harvard Health topics. Retrieved from <http://drugs.com/health-guide/hypochondriasis.html>