

PERPETRATOR PROFILE IN MUNCHAUSEN SYNDROME BY PROXY (PPMS)

*Caroline Magalhães Tenório Rocha
Sobrinho*

Janaina de Alencar Barbosa
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8144658282437183>

João Rubens Ribeiro Figueira
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/0271850670622882>

Alessa Moísa Barros Costa
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/4790460758419570>

Aline Coelho Moura
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1952629275410140>

Brunna Karolyne Aguiar Ferreira
<https://lattes.cnpq.br/4157077669366933>

Camyla de Oliveira Lisboa
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7762098032280875>

*Gisele Vasconcelos Calheiros de Oliveira
Costa*
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/0303605487239130>

Isabela Caracas Machado Borges
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/6248092653837652>

Pedro Henrique Oliveira Malta

Bernardo Alencar Suruagy Motta
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/9227522841893347>

Marcela Caracas Machado Borges

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Abstract: **Introduction:** Munchausen syndrome by proxy (PPMS) is conceptualized as a psychiatric disorder and is characterized when a person close to the child, mainly the mother, produces false hospital information inducing medicine to investigate the case. Falsification or production of clinical histories and laboratory evidence may occur and cause physical injuries and, in most cases, induce the child to be hospitalized with unnecessary therapeutic and diagnostic procedures, that is, it is a form of childhood abuse, which only in 1977 was reported in the medical literature. **Goal:** Trace the profile of the perpetrator, adding knowledge about this fictitious disorder. **Methodology:** An integrative review of the literature was carried out, using the databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Redalyc and the VHL-psi platform with the descriptors registered in DeCS: munchausen syndrome, munchausen syndrome by proxy, associated to the Boolean operator AND. **Results:** A total of 2036 articles were found, of which 2027 were excluded for deviating from the central theme. From the five articles analyzed, it was observed that the common profile of a perpetrator, with emphasis when this is the mother, is an unusual and extreme stance of cautious, attentive and cooperative conduct, in a way that deviates from the usual patterns of the relationship maternal. Furthermore, it was noticeable that she usually spends a good part of her time in the hospital, as she seems to enjoy medical procedures, especially sophisticated ones. Added to this, the study found that the victim's illness is in most cases considered unusual and difficult to diagnose, which are consolidated as several inconsistent diagnostic hypotheses constantly disseminated by the mother. **Conclusion:** The perpetrator, more specifically the mother, presents an unusual and extreme stance of cautious, attentive and cooperative behavior, in a way that deviates from the usual patterns

of the maternal relationship.

Keywords: Munchausen Syndrome, Perpetrator, Psychiatric disorder, Child abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Munchausen syndrome by proxy (PPMS) is a complex psychiatric disorder that has intrigued healthcare professionals around the world. This condition, characterized by the deliberate production of false medical information by a caregiver, usually the mother, results in unnecessary medical investigations and treatments for the child in her care. Since it was first described in medical literature in 1977, PPMS has been the subject of study and debate due to its insidious nature and devastating consequences for the victims involved. (Dyer, 2002)

The case of Dee Rose and her daughter Gypsy, portrayed in the American series "The Act" in 2020, highlighted the profound and lasting impact of SMPP on the lives of victims and their families. This emblematic case illustrates the complexity of the syndrome and highlights the urgent need for greater awareness and understanding of this devastating condition.

In this article, we carried out an integrative review of the literature to explore the clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of SMPP, with a special focus on the profile of the perpetrator. Through a critical analysis of existing literature, we seek to provide valuable insights into this complex syndrome and discuss challenges and future considerations for its prevention and appropriate management. Through discussion and analysis of available evidence, we hope to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of SMPP and improved outcomes for victims affected by this insidious condition. (Feldman & Yates, 2003; Sheridan, 2003; American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

Discussion: Understanding the

Complexity of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy

CONCEPT

Munchausen syndrome by proxy (PPMS) is a complex psychiatric condition that challenges healthcare professionals around the world. In this section, we will deepen the discussion on the clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of this syndrome, exploring its nuances and challenges.

CLINICAL ASPECTS

SMPP presents a wide range of clinical manifestations, making it a challenging condition to diagnose. Perpetrators, often mothers, exhibit extremely caring and cooperative behavior regarding the health of the child in their care. This apparently benevolent behavior often hides an obscure motivation: the search for attention and emotional gratification derived from the syndrome. (Dyer, 2002)

Victims of SMPP are often vulnerable children whose health conditions are fabricated or exacerbated by the perpetrator. False hospital information, produced by the perpetrator, often leads to extensive medical investigations and invasive treatments, resulting in an insidious cycle of medical abuse. (Feldman & Yates, 2003)

DIAGNOSTIC ASPECTS

The diagnosis of SMPP is complicated for several reasons. First, false information provided by the perpetrator often obscures the true nature of the child's condition. Additionally, victims of SMPP can experience a wide range of symptoms, which can be difficult to distinguish from legitimate medical conditions. (Sheridan, 2003)

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) provides diagnostic criteria for factitious disorders

imposed on others, formerly known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy. However, these criteria are not always easily applicable in clinical practice due to the complex and subtle nature of the syndrome. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)

THERAPEUTIC ASPECTS

The treatment of SMPP requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving mental health, pediatrics, psychology and social work professionals. It is crucial to address not only the child's medical needs, but also the psychological and emotional issues underlying the perpetrator's behavior. (Bass & Glaser, 2014)

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has been proposed as an effective therapeutic approach for individuals with PPMS. CBT can help identify and modify distorted thinking patterns and dysfunctional behaviors associated with the syndrome. Additionally, family therapy can play an important role in rebuilding healthy relationships and promoting a supportive environment for the child and their family. (Eminson, 2018)

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Despite advances in understanding PPMS, several challenges remain in the diagnosis and management of this condition. Lack of awareness and training among healthcare professionals can result in underdiagnosis and undertreatment of PPMS. Furthermore, the complex and multifaceted nature of the syndrome makes it difficult to establish clear treatment guidelines.

It is imperative that there is greater public awareness about SMPP so that cases are identified early and affected children receive the support and care they need. Additionally, more research is needed to investigate the risk factors, underlying mechanisms, and best

treatment practices for PPMS.

CONCLUSION:

SMPP is a devastating condition that affects not only victims, but also their families and communities. Understanding the clinical, diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of this syndrome is essential to providing the necessary support and care to affected children. It's time to raise awareness, promote education, and expand research into PPMS so we can improve outcomes and prevent future cases of this insidious syndrome.

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