Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Code: 300.7 (F45.22)

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Diagnostic Criteria 300.7 (F45.22)

A. Preoccupation with one or more perceived defects or flaws in physical appearance that are not observable or appear slight to others.
B. At some point during the course of the disorder, the individual has performed repetitive behaviors (e.g., mirror checking, excessive grooming, skin picking, reassurance seeking) or mental acts (e.g., comparing his or her appearance with that of others) in response to the appearance concerns.
C. The preoccupation causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
D. The appearance preoccupation is not better explained by concerns with body fat or weight in an individual whose symptoms meet diagnostic criteria for an eating disorder.
Body Dysmorphic Disorder 243
Specify if:
With muscle dysmorphia: The individual is preoccupied with the idea that his or her body build is too small or insufficiently muscular. This specifier is used even if the individual is preoccupied with other body areas, which is often the case.
Specify if:
Indicate degree of insight regarding body dysmorphic disorder beliefs (e.g., "I look ugly" or "I look deformed").
With good or fair insight: The individual recognizes that the body dysmorphic disorder beliefs are definitely or probably not true or that they may or may not be true.
With poor insight: The individual thinks that the body dysmorphic disorder beliefs are probably true.
With absent insight/delusional beliefs: The individual is completely convinced that the body dysmorphic disorder beliefs are true.

Diagnostic Features

Individuals with body dysmorphic disorder (formerly known as dysmorphophobia) are preoccupied with one or more perceived defects or flaws in their physical appearance, which they believe look ugly, unattractive, abnormal, or deformed (Criterion A). The perceived flaws are not observable or appear only slight to other individuals. Concerns range from looking "unattractive" or "not right" to looking "hideous" or "like a monster." Preoccupations can focus on one or many body areas, most commonly the skin (e.g., perceived acne, scars, lines, wrinkles, paleness), hair (e.g., "thinning" hair or "excessive" body or facial hair), or nose (e.g., size or shape). However, any body area can be the focus of concern (e.g., eyes, teeth, weight, stomach, breasts, legs, face size or shape, lips, chin, eyebrows, genitals). Some individuals are concerned about perceived asymmetry of body areas. The preoccupations are intrusive, unwanted, time-consuming (occurring, on average, 3–8 hours per day), and usually difficult to resist or control.
Excessive repetitive behaviors or mental acts (e.g., comparing) are performed in response to the preoccupation (Criterion B). The individual feels driven to perform these behaviors, which are not pleasurable and may increase anxiety and dysphoria. They are typically time-consuming and difficult to resist or control. Common behaviors are comparing one's appearance with that of other individuals; repeatedly checking perceived defects in mirrors or other reflecting surfaces or examining them directly; excessively grooming (e.g., combing, styling, shaving, plucking, or pulling hair); camouflaging (e.g., repeatedly applying makeup or covering disliked areas with such things as a hat, clothing, makeup, or hair); seeking reassurance about how the perceived flaws look; touching disliked areas to check them; excessively exercising or weight lifting; and seeking cosmetic procedures. Some individuals excessively tan (e.g., to darken "pale" skin or diminish perceived acne), repeatedly change their clothes (e.g., to camouflage perceived defects), or compulsively shop (e.g., for beauty products). Compulsive skin picking intended to improve perceived skin defects is common and can cause skin damage, infections, or ruptured blood vessels. The preoccupation must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Criterion C); usually both are present. Body dysmorphic disorder must be differentiated from an eating disorder.
Muscle dysmorphia, a form of body dysmorphic disorder occurring almost exclusively in males, consists of preoccupation with the idea that one's body is too small or insufficiently lean or muscular. Individuals with this form of the disorder actually have a normal-looking body or are even very muscular. They may also be preoccupied with other body areas, such as skin or hair. A majority (but not all) diet, exercise, and/or lift weights excessively, sometimes causing bodily damage. Some use potentially dangerous anabolic-
244 Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
androgenic steroids and other substances to try to make their body bigger and more muscular. Body dysmorphic disorder by proxy is a form of body dysmorphic disorder in which individuals are preoccupied with defects they perceive in another person's appearance.
Insight regarding body dysmorphic disorder beliefs can range from good to absent/delusional (i.e., delusional beliefs consisting of complete conviction that the individual's view of their appearance is accurate and undistorted). On average, insight is poor; one-third or more of individuals currently have delusional body dysmorphic disorder beliefs. Individuals with delusional body dysmorphic disorder tend to have greater morbidity in some areas (e.g., suicidality), but this appears accounted for by their tendency to have more severe body dysmorphic disorder symptoms.

Associated Features Supporting Diagnosis

Many individuals with body dysmorphic disorder have ideas or delusions of reference, believing that other people take special notice of them or mock them because of how they look. Body dysmorphic disorder is associated with high levels of anxiety, social anxiety, social avoidance, depressed mood, neuroticism, and perfectionism as well as low extroversion and low self-esteem. Many individuals are ashamed of their appearance and their excessive focus on how they look, and are reluctant to reveal their concerns to others. A majority of individuals receive cosmetic treatment to try to improve their perceived defects. Dermatological treatment and surgery are most common, but any type (e.g., dental, electrolysis) may be received. Occasionally, individuals may perform surgery on themselves. Body dysmorphic disorder appears to respond poorly to such treatments and sometimes becomes worse. Some individuals take legal action or are violent toward the clinician because they are dissatisfied with the cosmetic outcome.
Body dysmorphic disorder has been associated with executive dysfunction and visual processing abnormalities, with a bias for analyzing and encoding details rather than holistic or configural aspects of visual stimuli. Individuals with this disorder tend to have a bias for negative and threatening interpretations of facial expressions and ambiguous scenarios.

Prevalence

The point prevalence among U.S. adults is 2.4% (2.5% in females and 2.2% in males). Outside the United States (i.e., Germany), current prevalence is approximately 1.7%–1.8%, with a gender distribution similar to that in the United States. The current prevalence is 9%–15% among dermatology patients, 7%–9% among U.S. cosmetic surgery patients, 3%–16% among international cosmetic surgery patients (most studies), 8% among adult orthodontia patients, and 10% among patients presenting for oral or maxillofacial surgery.

Development and Course

The mean age at disorder onset is 16–17 years, the median age at onset is 15 years, and the most common age at onset is 12–13 years. Two-thirds of individuals have disorder onset before age 18. Subclinical body dysmorphic disorder symptoms begin, on average, at age 12 or 13 years. Subclinical concerns usually evolve gradually to the full disorder, although some individuals experience abrupt onset of body dysmorphic disorder. The disorder appears to usually be chronic, although improvement is likely when evidence-based treatment is received. The disorder's clinical features appear largely similar in children/adolescents and adults. Body dysmorphic disorder occurs in the elderly, but little is known about the disorder in this age group. Individuals with disorder onset before age 18 years are more likely to attempt suicide, have more comorbidity, and have gradual (rather than acute) disorder onset than those with adult-onset body dysmorphic disorder.
Body Dysmorphic Disorder 245

Risk and Prognostic Factors

Environmental. Body dysmorphic disorder has been associated with high rates of childhood neglect and abuse.
Genetic and physiological. The prevalence of body dysmorphic disorder is elevated in first-degree relatives of individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Culture-Related Diagnostic Issues

Body dysmorphic disorder has been reported internationally. It appears that the disorder may have more similarities than differences across races and cultures but that cultural values and preferences may influence symptom content to some degree. Taijin kyofusho, included in the traditional Japanese diagnostic system, has a subtype similar to body dysmorphic disorder: shubo-kyofu ("the phobia of a deformed body").

Gender-Related Diagnostic Issues

Females and males appear to have more similarities than differences in terms of most clinical features— for example, disliked body areas, types of repetitive behaviors, symptom severity, suicidality, comorbidity, illness course, and receipt of cosmetic procedures for body dysmorphic disorder. However, males are more likely to have genital preoccupations, and females are more likely to have a comorbid eating disorder. Muscle dysmorphia occurs almost exclusively in males.

Suicide Risk

Rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are high in both adults and children/adolescents with body dysmorphic disorder. Furthermore, risk for suicide appears high in adolescents. A substantial proportion of individuals attribute suicidal ideation or suicide attempts primarily to their appearance concerns. Individuals with body dysmorphic disorder have many risk factors for completed suicide, such as high rates of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, demographic characteristics associated with suicide, and high rates of comorbid major depressive disorder.

Functional Consequences of

Body Dysmorphic Disorder
Nearly all individuals with body dysmorphic disorder experience impaired psychosocial functioning because of their appearance concerns. Impairment can range from moderate (e.g., avoidance of some social situations) to extreme and incapacitating (e.g., being completely housebound). On average, psychosocial functioning and quality of life are markedly poor. More severe body dysmorphic disorder symptoms are associated with poorer functioning and quality of life. Most individuals experience impairment in their job, academic, or role functioning (e.g., as a parent or caregiver), which is often severe (e.g., performing poorly, missing school or work, not working). About 20% of youths with body dysmorphic disorder report dropping out of school primarily because of their body dysmorphic disorder symptoms. Impairment in social functioning (e.g., social activities, relationships, intimacy), including avoidance, is common. Individuals may be housebound because of their body dysmorphic disorder symptoms, sometimes for years. A high proportion of adults and adolescents have been psychiatrically hospitalized.

Differential Diagnosis

Normal appearance concerns and clearly noticeable physical defects. Body dysmorphic disorder differs from normal appearance concerns in being characterized by excess-
246 Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
sive appearance-related preoccupations and repetitive behaviors that are time-consuming, are usually difficult to resist or control, and cause clinically significant distress or impairment in functioning. Physical defects that are clearly noticeable (i.e., not slight) are not diagnosed as body dysmorphic disorder. However, skin picking as a symptom of body dysmorphic disorder can cause noticeable skin lesions and scarring; in such cases, body dysmorphic disorder should be diagnosed.
Eating disorders. In an individual with an eating disorder, concerns about being fat are considered a symptom of the eating disorder rather than body dysmorphic disorder. However, weight concerns may occur in body dysmorphic disorder. Eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder can be comorbid, in which case both should be diagnosed.
Other obsessive-compulsive and related disorders. The preoccupations and repetitive behaviors of body dysmorphic disorder differ from obsessions and compulsions in OCD in that the former focus only on appearance. These disorders have other differences, such as poorer insight in body dysmorphic disorder. When skin picking is intended to improve the appearance of perceived skin defects, body dysmorphic disorder, rather than excoriation (skin-picking) disorder, is diagnosed. When hair removal (plucking, pulling, or other types of removal) is intended to improve perceived defects in the appearance of facial or body hair, body dysmorphic disorder is diagnosed rather than trichotillomania (hair-pulling disorder).
Illness anxiety disorder. Individuals with body dysmorphic disorder are not preoccupied with having or acquiring a serious illness and do not have particularly elevated levels of somatization.
Major depressive disorder. The prominent preoccupation with appearance and excessive repetitive behaviors in body dysmorphic disorder differentiate it from major depressive disorder. However, major depressive disorder and depressive symptoms are common in individuals with body dysmorphic disorder, often appearing to be secondary to the distress and impairment that body dysmorphic disorder causes. Body dysmorphic disorder should be diagnosed in depressed individuals if diagnostic criteria for body dysmorphic disorder are met.
Anxiety disorders. Social anxiety and avoidance are common in body dysmorphic disorder. However, unlike social anxiety disorder (social phobia), agoraphobia, and avoidant personality disorder, body dysmorphic disorder includes prominent appearance-related preoccupation, which may be delusional, and repetitive behaviors, and the social anxiety and avoidance are due to concerns about perceived appearance defects and the belief or fear that other people will consider these individuals ugly, ridicule them, or reject them because of their physical features. Unlike generalized anxiety disorder, anxiety and worry in body dysmorphic disorder focus on perceived appearance flaws.
Psychotic disorders. Many individuals with body dysmorphic disorder have delusional appearance beliefs (i.e., complete conviction that their view of their perceived defects is accurate), which is diagnosed as body dysmorphic disorder, with absent insight/delusional beliefs, not as delusional disorder. Appearance-related ideas or delusions of reference are common in body dysmorphic disorder; however, unlike schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder, body dysmorphic disorder involves prominent appearance preoccupations and related repetitive behaviors, and disorganized behavior and other psychotic symptoms are absent (except for appearance beliefs, which may be delusional).
Other disorders and symptoms. Body dysmorphic disorder should not be diagnosed if the preoccupation is limited to discomfort with or a desire to be rid of one's primary and/or secondary sex characteristics in an individual with gender dysphoria or if the preoccupation focuses on the belief that one emits a foul or offensive body odor as in olfactory reference syndrome (which is not a DSM-5 disorder). Body identity integrity disorder
Hoarding Disorder 247
(apotemnophilia) (which is not a DSM-5 disorder) involves a desire to have a limb amputated to correct an experience of mismatch between a person's sense of body identity and his or her actual anatomy. However, the concern does not focus on the limb's appearance, as it would in body dysmorphic disorder. Koro, a culturally related disorder that usually occurs in epidemics in Southeastern Asia, consists of a fear that the penis (labia, nipples, or breasts in females) is shrinking or retracting and will disappear into the abdomen, often accompanied by a belief that death will result. Koro differs from body dysmorphic disorder in several ways, including a focus on death rather than preoccupation with perceived