

# PANDAS Disease, a Well Understood Disorder with a big Misdiagnosis Problem

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PANDAS is an acronym for Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal infection. It is an autoimmune condition initially triggered by strep infections, which disrupts a child's normal brain function. PANDAS occurs when the immune system produces antibodies, intended to fight an infection, and instead mistakenly attacks the basal ganglia in the child's brain by a mechanism known as molecular mimicry. This type of Strep shares an epitope with the basal ganglia, which is directly involved in movement disorders such as tics. An epitope is the part of the antigen that binds to a specific antigen receptor on the surface of a B cell. So the immune system basically thinks the fight is still on even after the infection is over. This easy to diagnose and still misdiagnosed disorder takes a toll on the patient's life, as the patient is left with severe movement and behavioral problems (tics, ocd symptoms, etc).

It is estimated that around 2% of the population worldwide suffer from OCD. It is also estimated that around a third of those cases started in the patient's childhood. Being an adults neurologist, I've seen at least 15 patients with PANDAS Disease, all of them previously misdiagnosed as pervasive developmental disorders, autism, oppositional defiant disorder, ADHD, etc. Upon interrogation with the parents, all of them met the "criteria" for the diagnosis of PANDAS Disease. The first patient I recognized with this disease was in 2016 and developed epilepsy. I showed the cause of this and you can read it in the CONy 2017 website at the epilepsy section. I recommend reading the article *PANDAS: The Need to Use Definitive Diagnostic Criteria* (Harvey S. Singer<sup>1,\*</sup> Monitoring Editor: Elan D. Louis)

My purpose is to raise awareness about this easy to diagnose but still many times unrecognized disorder, and to think about the possibility of many adults with OCD who were not accurately diagnosed during childhood, along with raising awareness of the severe side effects of medications used because of misdiagnosis.

In order to fulfill my purpose, I reviewed the cases that were still under my treatment (3) and contacted the parents of 2 more to see how it had gone. All of them were thankful for the treatment that I had given them and for the correct diagnosis. Despite the good news, none of them had complete remission of the symptoms. They were all just doing better.

My treatment basically consisted in low doses of clomipramine, GABA, magnesium and omega 3's. It also consisted in stopping the wrongly prescribed medications such as risperidone (which is one of the most dangerous antipsychotic drugs due to its extremely high incidence of Parkinson like symptoms).

I want to conclude that PANDAS Disease should be taken seriously, as the damage to the brain is severe, and so is the patient's social life. The correct diagnosis will impact directly in that person's future and will also protect him or her of the dangerous side effects of wrong given medications.

## References:

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