

PSYCHOSOMATICS: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BODY AND SOUL

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Abstract: This article examines the concept of psychosomatics as an interdisciplinary field that studies the relationship between mental and somatic processes. It explores the main theoretical approaches, schools of thought, and the contributions of leading scientists to the development of psychosomatic medicine, as well as analyzes the practical aspects of applying psychosomatic knowledge in modern psychology and medicine.

Keywords: psychosomatics, psychology, health, unconscious, medicine, emotions, body, illness, Freud, Alexander, Dunbar, Frankl.

Introduction

Psychosomatics is a branch of medicine and psychology that studies the influence of a person's emotional and mental states on the development and course of somatic (physical) diseases. The term "psychosomatics" comes from the Greek words psyche (soul) and soma (body), literally meaning "soul and body." Modern psychosomatic medicine views the body as a single system in which the psyche and body constantly interact. Any internal conflicts, suppressed emotions, or chronic stress can lead to physiological disorders. In recent decades, psychosomatics has become an important part of clinical practice, as up to 70% of diseases are of a psychoemotional nature. The purpose of this paper is to examine the theoretical foundations of psychosomatics, its laws, key concepts, and the contributions of scientists to the development of this field.

Discussion and Results

The psychosomatic approach is based on the recognition that the human body and psyche form a single self-regulating system. Any emotional, cognitive, or behavioral disturbances can affect physiological processes. The first systematic explanation of these connections was proposed by Sigmund Freud, who believed that repressed emotional conflicts could find an outlet through physical symptoms. Among Freud's most important achievements are the development of a tripartite structural model of the psyche (consisting of the id, ego, and superego), the identification of specific phases of psychosexual development, the creation of the theory of the Oedipus complex, the discovery of defense mechanisms operating in the psyche, the psychologization of the concept of the unconscious, the discovery of transference, and the development of therapeutic techniques such as free association and dream interpretation.

In the mid-20th century, psychoanalyst Franz Alexander developed the concept of specific emotional conflicts leading to specific illnesses. He identified the so-called "Chicago Seven"—a group of illnesses in which psychosomatic factors play a key role (peptic ulcer, hypertension, asthma, colitis, arthritis, etc.). Alexander argued that each illness is characterized by a specific emotional pattern.

Franz developed a functional theory of personality, which identified four main functions:

1. Perception of subjective needs (internal perception);

2. Perception of informational aspects of the surrounding world (the "sense of reality" or external perception);
3. Integration of internal and external perceptions (resulting in the planning of actions to address subjective needs);
4. Executive function (control of voluntary motor behavior).

F. Dunbar made a significant contribution to the development of clinical psychosomatics, considering personality traits as predisposing factors to certain illnesses. Her research showed that chronic emotional suppression, anxiety, and guilt can cause long-term physiological stress, leading to cardiovascular and gastrointestinal diseases. Dunbar believed that the psyche and soma, body and soul, are closely connected, and the physician must attend to both to successfully treat the patient. She sought to see the patient in their world and only then integrate this image with the patient's symptoms.

Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, expanded the understanding of psychosomatics by emphasizing the spiritual dimension of health. He argued that the loss of meaning in life or inner direction can cause not only psychological but also somatic disorders. Thus, spiritual emptiness becomes a factor in psychosomatic disorders.

Modern research confirms that chronic stress, depression, and internal conflicts activate hormonal and immune mechanisms, affecting the functioning of internal organs. From a neuropsychological perspective, the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system play an important role.

The biopsychosocial model proposed by J. Engel integrated biological, psychological, and social factors into a unified system for analyzing health. This model has become the theoretical foundation of modern psychosomatic medicine, where the patient is viewed not as a carrier of a disease, but as a holistic individual in the context of life circumstances.

In practical terms, psychosomatic approaches are used in psychotherapy, psychiatry, and family medicine. Therapy aims to understand and process emotional conflicts, restore inner balance, and develop healthy responses to stress. Methods include psychoanalysis, cognitive behavioral therapy, art therapy, body-oriented techniques, and relaxation, as well as medication.

Thus, psychosomatics not only explains the origins of many diseases but also offers practical ways to prevent and treat them. Modern research confirms that psychoemotional harmony is a key factor in health.

Conclusion

Psychosomatics is the science of the unity of mind and body. It reveals the complex relationships between emotions, thoughts, and physiological processes, helping us understand that physical health is inextricably linked to psychological well-being. Modern advances in psychosomatics are opening new horizons in disease prevention and treatment and fostering a humanistic approach to patient care.

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