Discussion of “International Spirit”

Although the psychiatric history is less clear, the patient's behavior, not seen in other members of the community, makes her inclined to diagnose a psychotic disorder. Unlike the history in the previous case, Nkichi's behavior is seen even for those involved in the movement: he is incorrigible, his behavior is bizarre (such as indecorum, indecent aggression), and his beliefs (e.g., that he can kill people by pouring his fingers on them, and that he is going to be a “scientist”) are not in keeping with the ideology of the movement.

It is not surprising that his symptoms are controlled with antipsychotic drugs, but return as soon as the drugs are withdrawn. Although Nkichi's history describes his psychotic experiences in terms of the split-possession movement, his behavior is disorganized, and he is unable to function. His total episode lasts only about 10 days, with apparent full return to his premorbid level of functioning, so the DSM-IV diagnosis Brief Psychotic Disorder (DSM-IV, p. 291) would be made. His subsequent episode lasts more than 1 month, but less than 6 months. If we, along with the local psychiatrist, change the diagnosis to Schizophreniform Disorder (DSM-IV, p. 291), since the onset of the episode of illness is within 6 weeks of the first noticeable change in his usual behavior or functioning, if the social and occupational functioning before the episode were good, we specify With Good Prognosis Remitting.

Other Cases From Africa

The Eleventh Pregnancy

Nkichi M. is a 38-year-old housewife from the middle belt area of Nigeria. She is married to the 14th child of her husband. She is admitted to the inpatient unit following referral by her husband, who is a surgeon.

The patient complained of headache, malaise, and pain in the perineal and abdominal areas of her chest. She also describes vomiting, pain, and a sensation of “something moving” in the suprapubic region. Other symptoms include intermittent crawling sensations in the head, neck, and

international cases
inside my belly is a punishment from God for what I did." At times she thought that God wanted her life as well, especially when she found herself exhausted after very little exertion, or having palpitations for no apparent reason. She found it particularly terrifying to be alone at night, unable to sleep, or having "weakness and bad dreams." The ipecacuanha was gradually discontinued, and the patient was given diazepam when needed for sleep. The physician wanted Nicchi to give up the idea that pills for her stomach symptoms were a solution to her problems. Nicchi did not take to this approach easily. When she was upset—for example, when the physician was late for an appointment or an expected visit did not turn up—she demanded a reinstatement of the ipecacuanha prescription. When she was reminded of the disappointment that had preceded the examination of symptoms, she changed her mind and was being praised for telling lies about symptoms. One day, she complained that she was being accused of telling lies about symptoms. She changed her mind when she was informed that she had been using a private doctor's opinion. (The memes disputed that she had used such a treatment.) On another occasion, when she was demanding discharge from the hospital, the physician refused to allow her, explaining that her symptoms were more significant. She pointed out how long she had been in the hospital (4 weeks) and how nobody had prescribed drugs that her brother promised her would be used in relieving her mental distress, palpitations, and other symptoms. The physician considered the patient's claim of difficulty in being treated by the hospital, the oldest of whom was only 22 years, and still dependent on her.

She achieved much symptom relief and was discharged with a prescription for diazepam. She never kept any outpatient appointments, since she had traveled a long way to seek help. However, the physician confirmed that she never received any more treatment for "alcohol or similar complaints.

**Discussion of "The Eleventh Pregnancy"**

The Nigerian psychiatrist who contributed this case noted that complaints emphasizing somatic symptoms rather than overtly emotional are common in African patients. Adjunctive Adjunctive

**Postpartum Piety**

This is a 26-year-old high-school teacher living in Lagos, Nigeria. She is married and has five children. The birth of her last child was uneventful.