Factor structure of Cotard's syndrome: systematic review of case reports

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BACKGROUND

Cotard's syndrome is a rare psychiatric condition. Because of this, current information is mainly based on reports and case series (1, 2). Berrios and Luque (3), when historically studying Cotard's syndrome in occidental psychiatric patients, analyzed 100 cases with this syndrome and three factors were found.

RESULTS

The search identified 86 articles, of which 69 were potentially relevant. After reviewing the full texts, 55 articles were selected for the systematic review, in which we found 69 cases.

An exploratory factor analysis extracted **three factors**: **“Psychotic depression”** in which it includes patients with delusions of guilt (0.721), suicidal ideas (0.685), delusions of damnation (0.662), nihilistic delusions of the body (0.642), depression (0.522) and hypochondriacal delusions (0.535). **“Delusive-hallucinatory”**, with patients who presented delusions of immortality (0.566), visual hallucinations (0.545) and nihilistic delusions of existence (0.451). **“Mixed”** with patients who presented nihilistic delusions of concepts (0.702), anxiety (0.573) and auditory hallucinations (0.560).

OBJECTIVES

To analyze the psychopathological characteristics and the factor structure of the symptoms of the Cotard's syndrome cases reported in the medical literature.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A systematic review of the literature of all reported cases of Cotard's syndrome from 2005 to January 2018 was performed in the MEDLINE / PubMed database. The clinical characteristics of each case were collected. A factor analysis of the symptoms was performed.

The psychopathology of the **Cotard's syndrome** is more complex than the simple association with the “delusion of being dead” since it **encompasses a factorial structure organized into 3 factors**

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Table 1. Age, sex and diagnosis of 69 patients with Cotard's syndrome reported from 2005 to 2018.

Characteristic	n (%)
Age, years, mean (± SD) [rank]	51.33 (± 17.4) [14-85]
Sex	
Male	31 (44.9%)
Female	38 (55.1 %)
Diagnosis	
Major depression	32 (46.4%)
Bipolar affective disorder	5 (7.2%)
Schizophrenia	7 (10.1%)
Organic mental disorder	19 (27.5%)
Others	5 (7.2%)
Not specified	1 (1.4%)

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Figure 1. Symptoms frequency of 69 cases of Cotard's syndrome.