

Stress and Somatic Symptoms

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Biopsychosociospiritual Perspectives



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Preface

This book primarily focuses on the assessment and treatment of patients with somatic symptoms, based on biopsychosociospiritual model. Basically, however, a broad spectrum of knowledge about stress is also needed for effective assessment and treatment of these patients because stress is closely related to the onset and course of disorders with somatic symptoms.

Although the role of religion in health and illness was overlooked for years, there is mounting evidence that religious cognitions and behaviors can offer effective resources for dealing with stress. In particular, much attention has focused on the role of spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with life stress. Moreover, people may have greater spiritual needs during illnesses, especially terminal illnesses. Addressing the spiritual needs of patients may enhance recovery from illnesses and protect them against depression.

Treatment of disorders with somatic symptoms is challenging because they cannot be treated according to the existing biomedical model and patients with somatic symptoms are usually resistant to psychosocial approach. Therefore, specific assessment skills and treatment techniques are required to approach them effectively. In this regard, the importance of biopsychosociospiritual approach to patient-centered care is emphasized.

This book consists of four parts. Part 1 “Stress” explores stress, vulnerability, and resilience, intermediate mechanisms between stress and illness such as psychoneuroendocrinology and psychoimmunology, the measurement of stress, the relationship between stress and accidents, and cognitive behavioral approach to stress.

Part 2 “Somatization” deals with the concept, mechanisms, assessment, and treatment of somatization. Particularly interview techniques for physicians to learn for effective assessment and management of somatization are presented and discussed. In addition, somatic symptom and related disorders in DSM-5 are included. However, the approach to chronic pain is separately added to this part because pain is a major concern for patients with these disorders.

Part 3 “Specific Physical Disorders” mainly deals with common and distressing functional physical disorders such as functional dyspepsia and irritable bowel syndrome as well as major physical disorders such as stroke, Parkinson’s disease,

dementia, headache, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer. Assessment and management of depression and anxiety in the medically ill and therapeutic approach for individuals at risk of coronary heart disease are also included. In addition, psychosocial issues of and therapeutic interventions for patients with specific cancers such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, and childhood cancer are addressed.

Part 4 “Religion, Spirituality, and Psychosomatic Medicine” emphasizes the importance of a biopsychosociospiritual perspective in an approach for patients with somatic symptoms, especially depressed patients with physical diseases and patients with terminal illnesses because of the growing need for spirituality in such patients. In addition, the role of spirituality as coping with stress and the relationship between religious involvement and mental/physical well-being are reviewed.

A considerable portion of all my chapters in the previously published book *Somatization and Psychosomatic Symptoms* edited by the author is included in some chapters of this book, because they are so essential in terms of the context of the book.

Overall, this book explores stress and a variety of issues relevant to the assessment and treatment of disorders with somatic symptoms in terms of biopsychosociospiritual perspectives. It will be of interest to researchers and healthcare practitioners such as psychiatrists, physicians, nurses, psychologists, and social workers dealing with stress, health, and mental health.

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Seoul, Korea

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