### Tocophobia: Case Report and Review of the Literature

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### Introduction

- **Tocophobia:** fear of childbirth prior to or during pregnancy
- **Type of specific phobia**
- **Affects 6-11% of women across cultures**
- **Fears include:** pain or injury during childbirth, body changes, emergency Cesarean section, delivering a malformed child, revisiting previous traumas

### Risk factors

- **Previous psychiatric diagnoses**
- **History of sexual abuse**
- **Nulliparous**
- **Younger age, lower socioeconomic class**
- **Previous childbirths (complicated or not)**
- **Seeing childbirth at a young age without explanation**
- **Psychosocial stressors**

### Tocophobia:

- **Systematic search of PubMed using search terms of (tocophobia), (tokophobia) and (fear of childbirth).** A total of 27 articles were reviewed, including case studies, case series and reviews.

### Case Presentation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</th>
<th>INITIAL PRESENTATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 29 year old married Caucasian female currently working on her Ph.D. dissertation</td>
<td>- Patient initially presented with anxiety, specifically focused on the fear of childbirth</td>
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<td>- Pain and disgust around pregnant women, related stories and pictures</td>
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<tr>
<th>PPH: Depression and anxiety since middle school, no previous psychiatrist or hospitalizations</th>
<th>- No substance abuse</th>
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<tr>
<td>- PMH: Allergic rhinitis - No known drug allergies</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Family history: significant for depression, anxiety and substance abuse in her immediate family</td>
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<tr>
<th>SOCIAL HISTORY</th>
<th>- Raised by both parents until age 11, when her parents divorced</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Took on parental role with three other siblings</td>
<td>- Codependence with mother</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Watched uncomplicated vaginal delivery of younger sister per mother’s request</td>
<td>- Strict vegetarian diet, exercises five times per week and calorie counts</td>
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### Treatments:

- **Exposure therapy**
- **Relaxation therapy**
- **Cognitive restructuring**

**Starting in August 2010:**

- **Pharmacologic therapy:** Escitalopram and Alprazolam

### Outcomes:

- **Improvement in both depression and anxiety symptoms**
- **Able to separate from her family**
- **Patient has started thinking about having a baby of her own**

### Literature Review

- **Systematic search of PubMed using search terms of (tocophobia), (tokophobia) and (fear of childbirth).** A total of 27 articles were reviewed, including case studies, case series and reviews.

- **Limited research available on the fear of childbirth.**

- In Finland and Sweden, 7-22% of maternal requests for C-sections are due to tocophobia.

- A cohort study in Finland demonstrated depression, advanced maternal age, previous C-sections, parity, low educational level, and high or unspecified socioeconomic status as the strongest risk factors. Those with FOC had higher rates of C-sections.

- **Based on the EIDERNS study of 720 women in six European countries, there was an 11% prevalence of intense FOC.** The women with FOC were significantly more likely to deliver via C-section.

- **Lifetime abuse and depressive symptoms were significantly associated with FOC.**

- **Exposure therapy was significantly more beneficial compared to placebo and indicated the necessity for full remission of symptoms.**

### References

- Storgard A, Kleppe EI, Solich B, Løseth M, Sørum A, Rø kkvam M. Fear of childbirth and mode of delivery in six European countries. The BEIDENS study. 22nd European Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (EBCOG), Book of Abstracts 2012; 814.4

### Conclusion

- **Tocophobia is pervasive and has important implications when untreated.**
- Little is known about the treatment options and their efficacies.
- **Multidisciplinary approach may be beneficial.**
- Need for further research.