

Importance of Detecting Malingering Patients in Clinical Setting

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Abstract : Objectives: Malingering is fabricating or exaggerating the symptoms of mental or physical disorders for a variety of secondary gains or motives, which may include financial compensation; avoiding work; getting lighter criminal sentences; or simply to attract attention or sympathy. Malingering is different from somatization disorder and factitious disorder. The prevalence of malingering is unknown and difficult to determine. In an estimated study in forensic population, it can reach up to 17% cases. But the accuracy of such estimates is questionable as successful malingerers are not detected and thus, not included. Methods: The case study of a 58 years old, right handed, graduate, pre-morbidly working in a national company with reported history of stroke leading to head injury; cerebral infarction/facial palsy and dementia. He was referred for disability certification so that his job position can be transferred to his son as he could not work anymore. A series of Neuropsychological tests were administered. Results: With a mental age of < 2.5 years; social adaptive functioning was overall < 20 showing profound Mental Retardation, less than 1 year social age in abilities of self-help, eating, dressing, locomotion, occupation, communication, self-direction, and socialization; severely impaired verbal and performance ability, 96% impairment in Activities of Daily Living, with an indication of very severe depression. With inconsistent and fluctuating medical findings and problem descriptions to different health professionals forming the board for his disability, it was concluded that this patient was malingering. Conclusions: Even though it can be easily defined, malingering can be very challenging to diagnosis. Cases of malingering impose a substantial economic burden on the health care system and false attribution of malingering imposes a substantial burden of suffering on a significant proportion of the patient population. Timely, tactful diagnosis and management can help ease this patient burden on the healthcare system. Malingering can be detected by only trained mental health professionals in the clinical setting.

Keywords : disability, India, malingering, neuropsychological assessment

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