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DHAT SYNDROME: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Background: Dhat syndrome is a widely recognized clinical condition from the Indian subcontinent characterized by a preoccupation with semen loss in urine and other symptoms such as fatigue or depressed mood. This condition has been considered to be a culture-bound syndrome, and may be considered to be a culturally manifestation of depression or anxiety.

Aims: The purpose of this paper was to perform a systematic review of published literature on Dhat syndrome.

Methods: A review of the literature on Dhat syndrome until July 2008, without any language restriction was conducted by a search of the MEDLINE and PsycLIT indexing services using the following key words: *Dhat syndrome*, *semen loss anxiety* and *loss of semen syndrome*. Inclusion criteria were any case-control or cross-over study.

Results: Twenty-three studies were identified, of which 10 met the inclusion criteria. There were 8 cross-over and 2 case-control studies. The reviewed studies included a total number of 680 cases and 93 controls. Patients included in these studies were mostly unmarried, young males (25.4 years old; 18-45 years) from a poor socio-economic status. Majority of the studies involved patients from the Indian subcontinent. Some studies reported concomitant depressive symptoms (50%), anxiety (40%), fatigue (30%) and sexual problems (40%). Only 4 studies reported information about treatment (psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy).

Conclusions: There was a high degree of heterogeneity among the studies reviewed. In conclusion, Dhat syndrome appears to be commonly associated with depression, anxiety and somatic symptoms. More studies are warranted related to the various treatment approaches for this condition.