Anxiety Disorders: OCD - Biological Theories & Treatment

Biopsychologists believe that OCD is caused by abnormal functioning of the nervous system, especially the brain.

Why?

Biopsychologists believe that all experience behaviour results from nervous system activity. Anything that affects the nervous system's structure and/or functioning is bound to have an effect on thinking, feeling or behaviour.

How?

Different brain areas have different functions. If a particular area became overactive or underactive, this might be experienced as a psychological symptom or an abnormal behaviour.

In OCD, the thalamus generates the intrusive, compulsive thoughts and, in response, the OFC generates feelings of anxiety until they are acted upon.

Brain structure and functioning can be influenced by the genes we inherit but also by changes in the balance of different brain chemicals (neurotransmitters).

Treating OCD requires altering brain functioning so that the areas responsible for the anxiety either reduce in activity or stop communicating with other brain areas.

This can be done chemically using SSRI drugs that reduce the activity of the chemical serotonin in the thalamus.

It can also be done with surgery that cuts the connection between the thalamus and the OFC.

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