

ABSTRACT

Background:

Charles Bonnet first described isolated visual hallucinations in an elderly man in 1769. De Morsier introduced the term 'Charles Bonnet Syndrome' in 1938 as further similar cases being reported. However, use of the eponym has been complicated by the lack of consensus about the diagnostic criteria. This article will review the historical and current literature about the Charles Bonnet Syndrome to examine the validity of its clinical features. Three cases of isolated visual hallucinations in Chinese patients are also reported.

Method:

Charles Bonnet and De Morsier original articles were translated and reviewed. A literature search was carried out on the Medline express and PsycLIT that included the key words " Charles Bonnet Syndrome" or " Visual hallucination" in the title. The studies reviewed cover the period from 1940 to 1998.

Result:

The author presents the characteristics of the case reported in the literature and compares that with the original articles. There is inconsistency as how to define the syndrome except isolated visual hallucination. It lacks an universally adopted diagnostic criteria, identifiable pathology and characteristic natural outcome makes it unlikely as an entity.

Conclusion:

Charles Bonnet Syndrome represents a heterogeneous group of people with isolated visual hallucinations. Without a unified criteria and plausible etiology identified, it does not stand alone as a syndrome or an entity. The lax use of the term indicates the confusion in the understanding and interpretation of a single symptom to become a syndrome and an entity. Unless there is evidence to prove its uniqueness, further using of the term would only provide false complacency.

Key words: Charles Bonnet Syndrome, diagnostic criteria, Chinese patients.