

CHAPTER 13: SOMATIC SYMPTOM DISORDERS RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- In conversion disorder, conscious control over either sensory input or voluntary movements appears to be blocked. What are the brain processes involved in causing this lack of conscious control?
- Not everyone who develops a somatic symptom disorder reports having had a significant number of negative life events (such as childhood neglect or abuse), so what triggers the development of somatic symptom disorders in such individuals?
- Why does an individual develop a somatic symptom disorder when they may have a history of risk factors that may indicate the development of some other psychiatric disorder (e.g. an eating disorder, depression, etc.)?
- What is the role of stress and trauma in the aetiology of somatic symptom disorders?
- Is there any convincing evidence that adopting a 'sick role' is a means of coping with life stress?
- Information processing biases may well explain how somatic symptom disorders are maintained, but what factors lead the individual to develop these biases in the first place?
- Physical symptoms associated with conversion disorder can often be 'contagious' and affect a number of people at the same time. What is the mechanism that underlies this group manifestation of symptoms?
- Is there an inherited component to somatic symptom disorders? If so, what is that inherited component?
- Are there any convincing controlled studies supporting the view that antidepressants are an effective treatment for somatoform disorders?
- Is CBT a more effective treatment for somatic symptom disorders than other forms of structured psychotherapy?