

Did Sir Winston Churchill have hyperkinetic or bipolar affective disorder?

Dr Adeel A. Siddiqui, Registrar in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Child and Family Centre, Ballyfermot, Dublin-10; Professor

Michael Fitzgerald, Henry Marsh Professor of Child Psychiatry, Trinity College, Dublin

Objective: This article sets out to discuss the psychopathology of Winston Churchill.

Method: It is a literature-based research conducted by reviewing already published material on Churchill.

Results: This paper suggests that Churchill had strong flavour of Hyperkinetic Disorder and/or may also have Bipolar Affective Disorder.

Conclusions: Sir Winston Churchill was born in 1874. He was a history maker and an exceptionally gifted man known to the world as British Prime Minister, a military General and a “relentless writer”. “In Admiralty he generated vitality because his energy was phenomenal and when he became Prime Minister his greatest skill was his ability to mobilise people”. He had difficult childhood; from very early age he was showing signs of “an independent, restless, stubborn, defiant character”. His school days were full of tensions held in “low self-esteem by his family and criticised by his masters for the forgetfulness, carelessness, unpunctuality and irregularity”. He always talked excessively, was impulsive in his remarks, had “fidgety hands” and “noisy mind”, all typical of Hyperkinetic Syndrome. Despite of these he had “phenomenal power to concentrate” which may be seen in ADHD as they have the ability of hyper focusing on their subject of interest. There seems to be strong family history of affective illness. Randolph, his father suffered from mood

swings “was too fond of fast company” and “aggressive high-jinx” .
His mother Jennie had “restless tongue and extravagant life style”
He described his mother as remote and inaccessible and his father
as stern and unpredictable. Churchill suffered from periods of intermittent
depression described by him as “black dogs” . He may
have suffered from elation of mood also as he could be very energetic,was
very reckless in his behaviour and enjoyed driving at high
speed. He was described as quick and fertile in thoughts. He drank
and smoke heavily. Queen Victoria described him as “man and
odd” .