

RECENT ADVANCES IN ENDOCRINOLOGY

Axiocrinology: The Intersection of Axiology and Endocrinology

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Abstract

Axiology, the science of values, and value systems, is not well known out of liberal arts circles. Endocrinology, the science of hormones, is considered an esoteric exercise by those outside of its ambit. Both, however, influence each other significantly. Axiology helps inform delivery of person centred care, while an understanding of hormones and neurotransmitters simplifies analysis of how values are shaped.

Keywords: communication, endocrinology, person centred care, psychosocial aspects.

Axiology

Axiology, the science of value, studies how individual value systems are created.¹ It analyses, for example, why one individual would spend money to receive aesthetic interventions, while another may decline to procure lifesaving medication. Such variation is not just inter-cultural or inter-individual; it may be intra-individual as well. A value proposition that seems positive today may cease to be affirmative later.

Endocrinology

Endocrinology studies hormones, which act as chemical messenger between various organs and cells of the body.² Hormones are similar, in many ways, to neurotransmitters, which relay rapid responses to external stimuli. Hormones influence our attitudes, behaviours and choices to a large extent. These, in turn, craft our value systems and behavior.³ Adrenergic or dopaminergic persons are those who have a dynamic, do-or-die value system. Hypothyroidism or Addisonian individuals may be characterized as being lazy or slothful. The term hyperadrenergic or masculine toxicity may be used to describe men with aggressive tendencies. On the other

hand, “serotonic” or “serotoned” would imply a happy relaxed person living in ataraxia or eudaimonia.

Obesity

The ongoing obesity epidemic has brought axio endocrinology into stark focus. The easy availability of modern anti-obesity medications, such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, has led to discussion and debate regarding their desirability and necessity.⁴ Axiology helps us understand why some individuals are willing to pay from pocket for these drugs, while others refuse to consider them. The subject also explains why some consider the transient side effects of glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists (GLP1RA) a minor nuisance, while others view them as a major intrusion in life.

Person Centred Care

Axiology has two pillars: ethics and aesthetics. An understanding of these allows as to practice what we term as clinical axiology. Axiology allows us to practice person centred obesity care, defined as care that is respectful of, and responding to the person's preferences, needs and values, while ensuring that individual values guide all decision making.⁵ While this concept is relevant for all clinical care, it is especially apt for chronic disease care, including obesity. Knowledge of endocrinology and psychology help the clinician relate to ethical, economic and aesthetic concerns of the individual and their close ones.

Clinical Axiology

Enquiry about the value systems of a particular individual, and the basis of these values, helps in baseline assessment. This has earlier been termed as sapiopsychotyping. This concept allows the clinician to craft a person-specific approach to counselling, education and support. This analysis influences the style, substance and strategy of communication, and serves as a foundation for later (or simultaneous) pharmacotherapeutic intervention. Just as medication choice is individual, therapeutic patient education should be planned keeping the individual's sapiopsychotype⁶ and biomedical needs in mind.

For clinical axiology to be successful, one should be well versed in not only the biopsychosocio environmental model of health, but the cultural, cognitive and cognitive aspects of being as well.⁷

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The Strength of Endocrinology

Endocrine clinicians add value by explaining the influence of various hormones, metabolites and autonomic transmitters on thoughts, attitudes and values.² They can also offer interventional techniques like hunger awareness training, designed to identify homeostatic, habitual and hedonistic hunger. Endocrine knowledge can also assist in mood mapping, i.e., identification of circadian variation in mood and behaviour, based upon known hormonal fluctuations. These include the seasonal variations in hormones, the menstrual cycle, and the dawn phenomenon.

Untapped Potential

Axio endocrinology has applications beyond obesity as well. It helps explain differing perspectives of disease or health, and allows humane understanding of human decisions in diverse clinical and public health situations, too.

A structured framework, however, is required to utilize the full potential of this discipline. Clinical axio endocrinology, or axiocrinology, should be explored in a systematic manner. Their discussion should be included in academic discourse, where ever relevant. Objective screening and monitoring tools should be developed and validated for use in clinical practice. Research, whether by qualitative, quantitative or mixed methodology, must be encouraged. Cross-disciplinary collaboration, between axiology and clinical science, will help optimize health care outcomes.

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