History of Morgellons Disease: From delusion to the definition

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Morgellons disease (MD) is a skin condition characterized by the presence of multicolored filaments that lie under, are embedded in, or project from the skin. Although the condition may have a longer history, disease matching the above description was first reported in the United States in 2002. Since that time, the condition that we know as MD has become a polemic topic. Because individuals afflicted with the disease may have crawling or stinging sensations and sometimes believe they have an insect or parasite infestation, most medical practitioners consider MD to be a purely delusional disorder. In a literature review, clinical studies supporting the hypothesis that MD is exclusively delusional in origin have considerable methodological flaws and often neglect the fact that mental disorders can result from underlying somatic illness. In contrast, rigorous experimental investigations show that this skin affliction results from a physiological response to the presence of an infectious agent. Recent studies from that point of view show an association between MD and spirochetal infection in humans, cattle, and dogs. These investigations have determined that the cutaneous filaments are not implanted textile fibers, but are composed of the cellular proteins keratin and collagen and result from overproduction of these filaments in response to spirochetal infection. Further studies of the genetics, pathogenesis, and treatment of MD are warranted.

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