Representation of Gilles de la Tourette syndrome in visual art

Natalia Szejko1, Alexander Münchau2, James Leckman3, Karolina Lizurej4, Jaroslaw Slawek5,6

1 Department of Clinical Neurosciences, University of Calgary, Canada
2 Institute of Systems Motor Science, University of Lübeck, Lübeck, Germany
3 Child Study Center, Yale University, USA
4 Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, Poland
5 Neurology and Stroke Department, St. Adalbert Hospital, Gdansk, Poland
6 Department of Neurological-Psychiatric Nursing, Medical University of Gdansk, Poland

Background
Gilles de la Tourette syndrome (GTS) has inspired both visual artists, film, and theatre directors as well as novelists. Art is frequently used as an avenue to talk about disease, but also as a possibility to obtain cathartic effect. The purpose of our work was to evaluate the examples of visual art serving as representation of the disease and an avenue to overcome the boundaries of their illness.

Methods
We conducted a narrative review of the information about visual artists whose work constitute representation of the illness experience in GTS.

From the thematic perspective
- art as a cathartic mean to present their experience with the disease
- a human figure entrapped in a closed space, which represents the relationship between the patient and disease
- the body in motion/the images of disfigured bodies representing tics
- art as a direct therapeutic mean to control tics

From the formal perspective
- expressionist
- abstract art
- surrealism
- collage
- comics
- watercolor
- combination of diverse techniques

Spectrum of Tourette, Kevin Gavaghan
Self-portrait, Patrick Lera
Tourette syndrome, John Fields
Remedial sketches, Lewis Rossingol
Disordered moments, Eli Smith