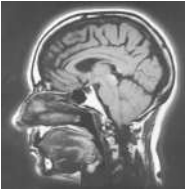


Evaluating the Biomedical Model of Abnormality



This activity will help you to:

- Consider some criticisms of the biomedical model
- Evaluate the biomedical model
- Use counterarguments when evaluating psychological material
- Write effective AO2 commentary in exams

Criticisms of the Biomedical Model

When we looked at the evidence for and against the biomedical view of eating disorders, you saw that in some respects the biomedical account was supported and in other respects it was challenged. Similar issues surround the biomedical model of abnormality in general. In order to be able to evaluate this model in an exam, you need to be able to consider both the strengths and weaknesses of the biomedical view.

These strengths and weaknesses centre on a number of issues including:

- The evidence in favour of the model
- The use of drug therapies
- The patient role
- Blame and stigma

The 'However' Paragraph

The important thing to appreciate when considering these issues is that they lead to both positive and negative criticisms of the biomedical model. When writing an essay, you can improve the quality of your commentary and evaluation by pointing this out. The formula for doing this is:

One strength of [whatever] is [explain the strength]. However, [another point that challenges the first one].

We are going to write some evaluation of the biomedical model of abnormality using this formula. Here is an example to show you how it's done:

One strength of the biomedical model is that it is supported by lots of evidence. Many studies have found that disorders like depression and schizophrenia are associated with abnormalities in different brain chemicals like serotonin and dopamine. However, it is often impossible to tell whether these chemical abnormalities are the cause or an effect of the disorder, which is a problem for the medical model.

Here's another example. The positive criticisms are given for you. You need to use the hints to construct a short 'however' paragraph for each.

The biomedical model is supported by the fact that drugs that alter the levels of different neurotransmitters are often effective in treating depression, schizophrenia and anxiety. However...

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Hint: what do you think may happen when the person stops taking the drugs?

Many people like the biomedical approach because they are familiar with the way it works. They go to a doctor, who tells them what is wrong with them and then prescribes medication that will make them better. However...

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Hint: passivity and disempowerment

Extension Activity

Now try writing an evaluative paragraph of your own, based around the issue of blame and guilt versus stigmatization. You might find it helpful to consult a textbook about the views of Szasz and Laing to help you construct your argument.