

**Movie:** *Saw* (2004)

**Synopsis:** In 2004, *Saw*, the initial installment of James Wan's horror franchise, premiered in US theaters. The film depicts two men who awake in a decrepit bathroom and discover that they must overcome both physical and psychological challenges to save themselves and the ones they love. The story unfolds through a series of flashbacks and twists within the plot, which explains their connection to each other and the reason for their predicament.

### **How it relates to the field of psychiatry**

*Saw* provides a foundation for the teaching of the cluster B personality disorders, particularly Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD), and the etiologies one must eliminate from the differential to make the diagnosis of a personality disorder. The villain in the film, Jigsaw, displays behaviors that are clinically significant and illustrate a pervasive pattern. Jigsaw fails to conform to social norms evident by his multiple abductions and tortuous killings. He deceives his victims through clues and misguidance for personal pleasure. He purposefully places individuals in situations that disregards their safety and shows no remorse for the ones he kills. This persistent pattern was confirmed when Dr. Lawrence Gordon realized that the one who is testing Adam and him is the known serial killer, Jigsaw.

However, the film does not provide the required additional information about Jigsaw to make the diagnosis of APD. As the viewer, we are not aware of what Jigsaw's behavior was when he was a child or the events in his life that lead him to develop these behavioral patterns. The diagnosis of APD requires a person to have a diagnosis of Conduct Disorder or the presence of certain behaviors prior to the age of 15. These behaviors include a disregard for the rights of people or animals, destruction of property, deceitfulness, and/or violation of rules and social norms. Without such information, Jigsaw does not provide a complete representation of APD.

Additionally, Jigsaw's behavior may be due to another general medical condition (GMC) which would obviate the diagnosis of a personality disorder. In the film, there is a flashback that shows Dr. Gordon, Zep Hindle, another victim of Jigsaw, and several medical students having a conversation about a patient named "John" who has an inoperable brain tumor. At the end of the film, it's dramatically revealed that "John" is Jigsaw's true identity. Given that John's tumor is in the frontal lobe, likely glioblastoma multiforme, his aggressive behavior may be due to his medical condition. Tumors in the frontal lobe often present with behavioral/emotional changes and impaired judgment.

For a true and comprehensive psychosocial formulation of John's behavior, the sequels to *Saw* provide additional collateral history that make this franchise one of the richest in psychiatric themes.

**Key Words:** Saw, Antisocial Personality Disorder, Jigsaw, John Kramer, Conduct Disorder, glioblastoma multiforme

Christine Annibali, Maggie Yesalavage, DO, Anthony Tobia, MD,. Copyright © 2016 Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. [tobiaat@rwjms.rutgers.edu](mailto:tobiaat@rwjms.rutgers.edu) All rights reserved.