

ANXIETY DISORDER

Dr.V.HEMAVATHY M.Sc., M.A., M Phil., Phd. (N) ¹

L.ASWINI M.sc (N) ²

1.Principal Sree Balaji College of Nursing chrompet ,Chennai

2. M.sc (N) Sree Balaji College of Nursing, Chrompet, Chennai.

Abstract:

An anxiety disorder is a mental health condition characterized by persistent, excessive worry or fear about everyday situations. These feelings are disproportionate to the actual threat posed by the situation and can interfere significantly with daily life, causing distress and impairing functioning. Anxiety disorders encompass a range of specific conditions, including generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, social anxiety disorder (social phobia), specific phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Key Words: phobia, social, Anxiety, Obsessive-compulsive.

Definition:

Anxiety disorders frequently have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Often, anxiety disorders involve repeated episodes of sudden feelings of intense anxiety and fear or terror that reach a peak within minutes (panic attacks).

Types of anxiety disorder:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD):

Individuals with GAD experience excessive worry and anxiety about a wide range of everyday events and activities. This anxiety is often difficult to control and is accompanied by symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, muscle tension, and sleep disturbances.

Panic Disorder:

Panic disorder is characterized by recurrent and unexpected panic attacks, which are sudden episodes of intense fear or discomfort that reach a peak within minutes. Symptoms of a panic attack may include palpitations, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, and feelings of unreality or detachment.

Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia):

People with social anxiety disorder have an intense fear of social situations where they may be scrutinized or judged by others. They fear embarrassment or humiliation and often avoid social gatherings or situations where they might be the center of attention. Physical symptoms may include blushing, sweating, trembling, nausea, and difficulty speaking.

Specific Phobias:

Specific phobias are characterized by intense fear or anxiety about specific objects or situations. Common phobias include fear of heights (acrophobia), fear of spiders (arachnophobia), fear of flying (aviophobia), fear of enclosed spaces (claustrophobia), and fear of needles (trypanophobia). Individuals with specific phobias may go to great lengths to avoid their feared objects or situations.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):

OCD is characterized by the presence of obsessions (repetitive, unwanted thoughts, images, or urges) and/or compulsions (repetitive behaviors or mental acts performed in response to the obsessions). Examples of obsessions include fears of contamination, fears of harm coming to oneself or others, or concerns with symmetry and order. Compulsions are often rituals or repetitive behaviors performed to reduce anxiety or prevent a feared outcome.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

PTSD can develop after exposure to a traumatic event, such as combat, sexual assault, natural disasters, or serious accidents. Symptoms include intrusive thoughts or memories of the trauma, flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of reminders of the trauma, negative changes in mood and cognition, hyperarousal (e.g., being easily startled, irritability), and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

1. Emotional Symptoms:

- Excessive worry or fear about everyday situations or events.
- Feeling restless, on edge, or keyed up.
- Irritability or feeling easily annoyed.
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank.
- Fear of losing control or going crazy.
- Feeling like something terrible is going to happen.

2. Physical Symptoms:

- Rapid heartbeat (palpitations) or pounding heart.
- Sweating, trembling, or shaking.
- Shortness of breath or a feeling of being smothered.
- Chest pain or discomfort.
- Nausea, abdominal distress, or diarrhea.
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, or feeling faint.
- Numbness or tingling sensations (paresthesias).
- Muscle tension or muscle aches.
- Difficulty sleeping or insomnia.

3. Behavioral Symptoms:

- Avoidance of situations or places that trigger anxiety.
- Ritualistic behaviors or compulsions (in OCD).
- Seeking reassurance from others.
- Procrastination or avoidance of tasks due to anxiety.

4. Cognitive Symptoms:

- Racing thoughts or difficulty controlling worry.
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank.
- Catastrophic thinking (imagining the worst-case scenarios).
- Overthinking or ruminating about past events or future possibilities.

5. Social and Interpersonal Symptoms:

- Difficulty with social interactions or fear of social situations (in social anxiety disorder).
- Fear of being judged or evaluated negatively by others.
- Difficulty maintaining relationships due to anxiety-related behaviors.

6. Other Symptoms:

- Fatigue or feeling tired despite adequate rest.
- Changes in appetite (either increased or decreased).
- Increased sensitivity to sensory stimuli (e.g., noise, light).
- Feelings of derealization (feeling detached from oneself or surroundings) or depersonalization (feeling like an outside observer of one's own thoughts, feelings, or body).

Diagnostic Evaluation:

- ❖ History collection
- ❖ Mental Status Examination
- ❖ Physical Examination

Treatment:**Therapy**

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** This is the most widely used therapy for anxiety disorders. It helps you identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to anxiety.
- **Exposure Therapy:** Involves gradually exposing yourself to the feared object or situation in a safe and controlled manner, helping to reduce anxiety over time.
- **Other Therapies:** Such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), or mindfulness-based therapies, which can also be effective depending on the individual's needs.

Medication:

- **Antidepressants:** SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) and SNRIs (Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors) are commonly prescribed for anxiety disorders. They help regulate neurotransmitters involved in mood and anxiety.
- **Benzodiazepines:** These are fast-acting medications that can provide temporary relief for severe anxiety, but they are generally prescribed for short-term use due to the risk of dependence.

Lifestyle Changes:

- **Regular Exercise:** Physical activity can help reduce anxiety symptoms by releasing endorphins and promoting overall well-being.
 - **Healthy Diet:** Avoiding excessive caffeine and alcohol, which can exacerbate anxiety symptoms, and maintaining a balanced diet can support mental health.
 - **Stress Management:** Techniques such as mindfulness meditation, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation can help manage stress and anxiety.
- Support Groups:** Connecting with others who experience similar challenges can provide emotional support and practical coping strategies.
- Self-Care:** Taking time for hobbies, relaxation, and sufficient sleep are important for overall mental health and can reduce anxiety symptoms.

Conclusion:

Anxiety disorders are complex but treatable conditions that can significantly impact daily life. Effective treatment typically involves a combination of therapy, medication, and lifestyle changes. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is often the cornerstone of therapy, helping individuals address negative thought patterns and behaviors. Medications such as SSRIs and SNRIs may be prescribed to regulate neurotransmitters involved in anxiety.

References:

- P.Prakash, "Textbook of Mental Health psychiatric Nursing" first edition,CBS publication,Pg.no.210-213
- R.Sreevani, "A Guide to Mental Health and psychiatric nursing,4thEdition jaypee publication,Pg.no190-202
- Mary.C.Townsend , "Nursing diagnosis in psychiatric Nursing ,8th Edition,Jaypee publication Pg.No 241-243
- Rajesh G Konnur, "Textbook of psychiatric Nursing"first edition,Jaypee publication,pg.no222-234
- <https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/anxiety-disorders>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/anxiety-disorders/what-are-anxiety-disorders>