Anxiety Disorders

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All humans experience fear and anxiety:

- cause of fear is obvious and understandable.
- anxiety is distressing, unpleasant emotional state (emotional arousal) of nervousness and uneasiness.
- anxiety causes are less clear (fear that seems to arise from unknown source).
- anxiety is less tied to exact timing of threat - it can be anticipatory before threat, persist after threat has passed, or occur without identifiable threat.
- anxiety is accompanied by physical changes and behaviors similar to those caused by fear.
- some degree of anxiety is adaptive (can help to prepare, practice, and rehearse so that functioning is improved and can help to be appropriately cautious in potentially dangerous situations).
- beyond certain level, anxiety causes performance efficiency to decrease → dysfunction and undue distress → further increase in anxiety – anxiety becomes maladaptive and considered disorder.
- panic is most extreme form of anxiety.

Yerkes-Dodson curve showing relationship between emotion arousal (anxiety) and performance:

EPIDEMIOLOGY

- Anxiety disorders - most common psychiatric disorders (lifetime prevalence 15%; female-to-male ratio ≈ 3:2).
- 25% healthy individuals are anxious at some point in their lives (7.5% of these people have diagnosable anxiety disorder in any given month).
- high rates of comorbidity with major depression and alcohol / drug abuse.

ETIOPATHOPHYSIOLOGY

- interaction of biopsychosocial factors (incl. genetic vulnerability*) with situations / stress / trauma.
Anxiety merits treatment if following apply:
1. Some primary psychiatric disorders (heritability is polygenetic); but some patients appear to acquire same disorders as their relatives through learned behavior (even normal child has difficulty remaining calm and composed in presence of anxious parent)
2. Major mediators:
   - CNS - norepinephrine and serotonin; corticocortisol-releasing factor may be involved.
   - e.g. overactivity of noradrenergic systems projecting from locus ceruleus into forebrain regions
   - PNS - sympathetic nervous system.

CLINICAL FEATURES

1. Psychological symptoms
   1) apprehension, worry, fear, anticipation of misfortune, sense of doom or panic
   2) irritability, hypervigilance, insomnia
   3) fatigue
   4) difficulty concentrating
   5) derealization (world seems strange or unreal) and depersonalization (patient feels unreal or changed)
   6) predisposition to accidents

2. Somatic complaints (many patients visit their primary care physicians for physical symptoms)
   1) CNS - headache, dizziness.
   2) CV - hypertension, tachycardia / arrhythmias, palpitations, chest pain.
   3) GI - dry mouth, upset stomach, diarrhea.
   4) GU - frequent urination.
   5) RESPIRATORY - lump in throat, tachycardia-hyperventilation (→ shortness of breath, paresthesias, weakness, carpopedal spasm due to respiratory alkalosis, lightheadedness, altered consciousness).
   6) SKIN - diaphoresis, cool & clammy skin, sweaty palms.
   7) MUSCLE - tremor, trembling, motor tension, hyperreflexia, easy startling, fidgeting.

   - most anxiety disorders begin in childhood ÷ early adulthood.
   - most anxiety in older adults should prompt search for unrecognized general medical condition, substance abuse disorder, or major depression.
   - ability to tolerate given level of anxiety varies from person to person.
   - one person's passion may be another's anxiety (e.g. some find speaking before group exhilarating, whereas others dread it).
   - anxiety can be so distressing and disruptive that depression may result.
   - severe anxiety disorders may be complicated by suicide!
   - chronic anxiety → increased risk for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.

DSM-IV-TR classification of anxiety disorders

(all categories include significant distress or interference with normal functioning or routines caused by symptoms): lifetime prevalence

1. Panic disorder (lifetime prevalence 1.5-5.0%)
2. Generalized anxiety disorder (lifetime prevalence 4.1-6.6%)
3. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) (lifetime prevalence 1.7-4.0%)
4. Specific phobia
5. Social phobia (lifetime prevalence 2.6-13.3%)
6. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (lifetime prevalence 1.9-3%)
7. Acute stress disorder (ASD)
8. Adjustment disorder with anxious features
9. Anxiety due to general medical condition (old name - organic anxiety disorder) - anxiety caused by medical and surgical disorders (anxiety may be presenting complaint!);
   examples: phaeochromocytoma, hypoglycemia, asthmas, hyperthyroidism, temporal lobe epilepsy.
10. Substance-induced anxiety disorder (formerly was included with organic anxiety disorder): abstinence of CNS depressants, intoxication with CNS stimulants or sympathomimetics (incl. caffeine beverages), Chinese restaurant syndrome (monosodium glutamate ingestion).

Some primary psychiatric disorders may be associated with anxiety (which may be presenting complaint):

1. 70% depressed patients feel anxious (20-30% of apparent cases of anxiety are caused by underlying depression); 20-50% depressed patients have panic attacks (40%-90% patients with panic disorder become depressed).
2. Patients who experience psychotic disorganization often display considerable anxiety (may obscure underlying severe delusional disorder).
3. Anxiety is most common emotion experienced in delirium (frightened by sudden disruption of cognitive abilities).
4. Anxiety is common in dementia when mental syndromes are made worse by intercurrent illness or by sudden change in environment (e.g. change in roomate of hospitalized demented patient).
5. Adjustment disorder.

DIAGNOSIS

N.B. anxiety disorders have one of longest differential diagnosis lists of all psychiatric disorders?

When probability of causative general medical disorder is low:
1) CBC
2) chemistry profile
3) thyroid function tests
4) urinalysis
5) urine drug screen

PET - increased metabolism in medial temporal lobe and insular cortex during panic attacks.

TREATMENT

Anxiety meets treatment if following apply:
1) other causes are not identified
2) anxiety is very distressing and interferes with functioning
3) anxiety does not stop spontaneously within few days

ANXIETY DISORDERS

Page 25 (2)
LIFESTYLE
- discontinue caffeine-containing products.

- review OTC preparations and herbal remedies (ephedrine and other herbal compounds may precipitate / exacerbate anxiety).
- at least mild-to-moderate daily exercise program.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY
Effective for phobias (treatment of choice!), panic anxiety, generalized anxiety, situational anxiety, OCD.
- in mild cases, behavioral therapy alone is sufficient; drug therapy may be needed in more severe cases (SSRIs are first choice).

Systematic desensitization - patients are taught *deep muscle relaxation*; then taught to visualize scene involving thoughts that are opposite of anxious thinking such as feeling safe, relaxed, and in control, next, patients imagine anxiety-provoking situations.
- as soon as anxiety begins to emerge, scene that induces relaxation is revoked until anxiety ceases; anxiety-provoking and comforting scenes are repeatedly paired until thought of former no longer causes anxiety.
- beginning with situation that provokes least anxiety, patients gradually move up hierarchy of situations to ones that are most feared.
- when patients can visualize most anxiety-provoking scene while still feeling relaxed, less anxiety is experienced in corresponding real-life situation.
- to consolidate this gain, "in vivo" desensitization in actual situations by using combination of relaxation and exposure while again progressing from least to most anxiety-provoking situation.

Adjustive behavioral techniques - useful for any type of anxiety.
Hypnosis helps patients concentrate on calming thoughts that are incompatible with anxiety.
Relaxation techniques: because individual cannot feel tense and relaxed at same time, any method that decreases tension tends to relieve anxiety.
Biofeedback is useful for patients who prefer to learn to relax with machine or without anyone else present; level of muscular tension (usually in forearm or frontalis muscles) is "fed back" through visual or auditory stimulus to help patients learn to decrease motor tension and, with it, anxiety.

For hyperventilation - re breathe into paper bag held over nose and mouth (CO₂ accumulates and reverses respiratory alkalosis).

OTHER DRUG TREATMENTS
• Hypnotics (e.g. MEPROBAMATE)
• Antihistamines (e.g. HYDROxyzINE)
• Benzodiazepines
  - first choice for panic anxiety, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD.
  - in mild cases, behavioral therapy alone is sufficient; drug therapy may be needed in more severe cases (SSRIs are first choice).
  - indicated for panic anxiety, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD.

• Antidepressants (esp. SSRI)
  - effective for panic disorder, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD.
  - also indicated if 3-month trial of psychotherapy and behavior therapy for treatment of exogenous anxiety is unsuccessful.
  - drugs facilitate psychotherapy and behavior therapy.

• Antianxiety agents - minor tranquilizers (e.g. chlorpromazine)
  - indicated for panic anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, acute situational anxiety, agoraphobia, OCD, PTSD.
  - in panic disorders when they are not responses to specific trauma or conflict.
  - also indicated if 3-month trial of psychotherapy and behavior therapy for treatment of exogenous anxiety is unsuccessful.
  - drugs facilitate psychotherapy and behavior therapy.

• Antipsychotics
  - effective for panic disorder, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD.

• Benzodiazepines - most effective antianxiety drugs!!
  - drugs of choice for short courses (< 6-8 weeks) - acute situational anxiety, adjustment disorder, anticipatory anxiety associated with panic attacks, generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder.
  - long-term use is " Fed back", and treatment-emergent anxiety!!!
  - benzodiazepines are likely to interfere with cognitive-behavioral therapy!
  - closely monitor for unauthorized dose escalation or obtaining benzodiazepine prescriptions from multiple sources.

• Antidepressants (esp. SSRI)
  - drugs of first choice for chronic use!!
  - effective for panic disorder, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD.

• Hypnotics used in long-term therapy of generalized anxiety disorders (efficacy comparable to benzodiazepines?), may require 1-2 weeks to reach therapeutic effect; see p. 893.

• Barbiturates - prescribed only in very rare case of patient who has been taking them for years and cannot be withdrawn.

• Antihistamines (e.g. HYDROxyzINE, TIPHENIDAZINE) - frequently used for elderly patients; not as effective as other antianxiety drugs.

• Antipsychotics - indicated only for anxiety associated with psychoses.

• Anticonvulsants (e.g. DIVALPOXINE, GABAPENTIN) - have role in treatment (esp. in patients with high potential for abusing benzodiazepines).

• E-blockers (e.g. PROPRANOLOL) - for anxiety accompanied by signs of adrenergic stimulation (e.g. sweating, tremor) and for performance anxiety ("cone dose for stage fright"); safe for long-term use; ATENOLOL may reduce social phobia.

• Other MINOR TRANQUILIZERS (largely replaced by benzodiazepines).

PSYCHOSURGERY
- for rare cases of severe treatment-refractory OCD.

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY
- not effective.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

PANIC DISORDER
Panic attacks – sudden unexpected unpredicted (spontaneous) episode of intense anxiety; anxiety does not have particular content associated with it (i.e. panic anxiety does not involve fear of any specific circumstance).

- if panic attacks recur predictably in temporal relationship to trigger; these panic attacks usually implicate specific phobia-type diagnosis (e.g. social phobia)
- reach peak within 10 minutes and subside in < 1 hour.
- may wake patients from sleep.

- sense of dread is most prominent psychological symptom - may be masked by or seem to be reaction to PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS (autonomic arousal) that frequently accompany panic attacks (to make DSM diagnosis, 4 of 13 must be present):
  1) palpitations, pounding heart, accelerated heart rate
  2) sweating
  3) trembling or shaking
  4) sense of shortness of breath or smothering
  5) feeling of choking
  6) chest pain or discomfort
  7) nausea or abdominal distress
  8) feeling dizzy, unsteady, lightheaded, or faint
  9) derealization (feelings of unreality) or depersonalization (feeling detached from oneself)
  10) fear of losing control or going crazy
  11) fear of dying
  12) numbness or tingling sensations
  13) chills or hot flashes

- Although uncomfortable - at times extremely so - panic attacks are not medically dangerous!

- insight and judgment are intact!
- physical examination (to exclude physical disorder!) - non-specific signs of sympathetic hyperactivity.

DSM-IV-TR criteria for panic disorder: at least one panic attack followed by 2 - 1 month worries about:
- having more panic attacks
- consequences of panic attack (e.g. that patient is losing control or having heart attack)
- change in behavior caused by panic attacks (e.g. not leaving house).

Clinical course may evolve gradually in stages:
1. Subclinical anxiety attacks
2. Full-blown panic attacks
3. Hypochondriacal fears of occult disease
4. Development of anticipatory anxiety about panic attacks
5. Agoraphobia (phobic anxiety toward places or situations in which escape may be difficult or embarrassing if panic did occur)
Note: AGORAPHOBIA IS NOT STAND-ALONE DISORDER; IT IS DESCRIPTIVE TERM [E.G. PANIC DISORDER WITH AGORAPHOBIA]
6. Abuse of drugs / alcohol to control anxiety
7. Depression (lifelong prevalence of major depression 50-60%)
8. Social limitations

- women = men = 2.3 : 1
- bimodal distribution of highest incidence: late adolescence and mid 30s.
- frequency of panic attacks varies from several attacks day to only few attacks year.
- suicidal ideation / completed suicide have been associated with panic disorder.
- etiopathologic theories:
  - a) serotoninergic model - exaggerated postsynaptic receptor response to synaptic serotonin, subactivity of 5HT1A receptors.
  - b) catecholamine model - increased sensitivity to adrenergic CNS discharges, with hypersensitivity of presynaptic α2 receptors.
  - c) locus ceruleus model - panic symptoms are due to increased local discharge resulting in adrenergic neuron stimulation, similar to more general catecholamine theory; locus ceruleus activity affects hypothalamic - pituitary - adrenal axis, which can respond abnormally to clonidine in patients with panic disorder.
  - d) lactate model - symptom production by postulated aberrant metabolic activity induced by lactate.
  - e) false sulfonation carbon dioxide hypothesis - hypersensitive brainstem receptors.
  - f) GABA model - decreased inhibitory receptor sensitivity.
  - g) neuroanatomic model - panic attacks are mediated by "fear network" in brain that involves amygdala, hypothalamus, and brainstem centers.
  - h) genetic hypothesis has attempted to refer panic disorder to definable genetic loci, without success to date (heritability rates range 0.3-0.6%).

Treatment:
Reassurance and calming environment + antidepressant (SSRIs are used as first-line agents for long-term management)

- all antidepressants (except bupropion) have been found effective for panic disorder; FDA approved:
  - Venlafaxine, Imipramine (10 mg / 50 mg), Paroxetine, Sertraline, Fluoxetine (comb if depression is present; may initially increase anxiety)
- control is gradually achieved over 2-4 weeks (SSRIs can cause initial exacerbation of panic symptoms!); begin with lowest dose with increase at follow-up visit.
- improvement should appear within 1 month, if improvement has not begun within 4-6 weeks → benzodiazepine
- benzodiazepines act fast (preferable in ED) but carry liability of dependence (benzodiazepines can be reasonably used as initial adjunct, while SSRIs are titrated to effective dose).
- may be used as standing-dose q12h or higher.
- most widely used are:
  - Alprazolam (0.5 mg / 2mg; dosage may be increased up to 10 mg/day)
  - Clonazepam (1-5 mg /day)
  - Alprazolam has been widely used, but it is currently disapproved because of its higher dependence potential. Chief reason has to become familiar replacement; longer half-life and fewer withdrawal reactions.
- refractory panic disorder – try β-blockers, Clonazepam, calcium channel blockers, antipsychotics, buspirone, anticonvulsants (valproate, gabapentin).

Panic control therapy (modification of cognitive behavioral therapy) - redefining symptoms of panic attack through reeducation or the openness of breath as harmless physiologic responses to anxiety rather than signs of catastrophic illness.

N.B. psychodynamic psychotherapy is not effective!

- facilitated by actual induction of panic symptoms (e.g. by spinning patient around in chair to produce dizziness).
- behavioral therapy is especially useful for agoraphobia (it rarely responds to drugs, because patients often continue fear that they might have panic attack, even long after their panic has been well controlled by drug therapy) - patients are told:
  1) not to avoid situations
  2) to understand that their worries are unfounded
  3) to respond instead with slow, controlled breathing (or other methods that promote relaxation).
GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

**Generalized anxiety** – persistent excessive (unrealistic) worry about many actual or potential events or situations. It is a fear of specific but multiple circumstances.

- *multiple (≥ 2) worries, which often shift over time (i.e. focus of worry is broader than in other anxiety disorders)
- worrying is difficult to control
- often begins in childhood or adolescence (but may begin at any age).
- course is fluctuating and chronic, with worsening during stress.
- most patients have other comorbid psychiatric disorders (major depression, specific phobia, social phobia, panic disorder).
- suicidal ideation / completed suicide have been associated with GAD.

**DSM-IV criteria**: at least 6 months of almost daily generalized anxiety accompanied by at least three of six additional symptoms of anxiety:

- restlessness or feeling keyed up
- easy fatigability
- difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- irritability
- muscle tension
- insomnia.

- Panic anxiety and generalized anxiety often accompany each other:
  - subpanic anxiety may mimic generalized anxiety;
  - anticipatory anxiety is type of generalized anxiety.

**TREATMENT**

1. SSRI: FDA approved: VENLAFAXINE, DEXTALPROPRIN, PAROXETINE, LOXETINE.
2. Benzodiazepines - rapidly effective (start with SSRI, once antidepressant becomes effective, benzodiazepine is tapered).
3. BUSPIRON (alternative to SSRIs) – FDA approved.
4. β-blockers.

- 30% patients do not recover with appropriate pharmacotherapy - diagnosis may be incorrect (e.g. patient may have anxiety secondary to personality disorder, depression, or psychosis), or anxiety may be caused by medical or substance-related disorder.

Relaxation training (!), hypnosis, biofeedback, psychotherapy (supportive and cognitive-behavioral) is challenging because of diffuse focus of symptoms.

**OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)**

**Definitions**

**Obsessions** - unwanted and bothersome recurrent (persistent) ideas, images, and impulses that intrude upon patient and cannot be pushed out of consciousness.

- obsessions are experienced as senseless or repugnant and patient tries to ignore or resist them.
- if poor insight is present, patients do not view obsession as absurd; if poor insight reaches delusional proportions, patient is convinced that obsessions are realistic or justified.

**Compulsions** - irresistible need to perform activity (obsessions and compulsions usually go together).

**Rituals** - stereotyped repetitive behaviors (physical or mental actions) that must be performed with subjective sense of necessity (to ward off unwanted future happenings, to satisfy obsession) and often have symbolic meaning.

- may be physical (e.g. handwashing) or mental (e.g. repeating series of numbers to oneself).

- these activities may consume patient's whole day, rendering him unable to complete any necessary task.

- connection between obsessions and compulsions may have element of logic (e.g. hand washing to avoid disease), in other cases, relationship may be illogical and idiosyncratic (e.g. counting to 50 over and over to prevent grandpa from having heart attack).

- anxiety may be associated with obsession, and ritual performance may temporarily relieve this anxiety.

To differentiate OCD from psychosis, patient must realize that thoughts or behaviors are irrational.

**DSM-IV criteria**: individual expresses either obsessions or compulsions.

**Obsessions** are defined by following 4 criteria:

1. recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images are experienced at some time as intrusive and inappropriate and cause marked anxiety and distress.
2. thoughts, impulses, or images are not simply excessive worries about real-life problems.
3. person attempts to suppress or ignore such thoughts, impulses, or images or to neutralize them with some other thought or action.
4. person recognizes that obsessional thoughts, impulses, or images are product of his/her own mind (not imposed from without, as in thought insertion).

**Compulsions** are defined by following 2 criteria:

1. person performs repetitive behaviors (e.g. hand washing, ordering, checking) or mental acts (e.g. praying, counting, repeating words silently) in response to obsession or according to rules that must be applied rigidly.
2. behaviors or mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing some dreaded event or situation; however, these behaviors or mental acts either are not connected in realistic way with what they are meant to neutralize or prevent or they are clearly excessive.

- at some point during course of disorder, person recognizes that obsessions or compulsions are excessive or unreasonable; this does not apply to children.
- obsessions or compulsions cause marked distress; are time consuming (take > 1 h/d); or significantly interfere with person's normal routine, occupational or academic functioning, or usual social activities or relationships.
- if another Axis I disorder is present, content of obsessions or compulsions is not restricted to it (such as preoccupation with food and weight in presence of eating disorder, hair pulling in presence of trichotillomania, concern with appearance in body dysmorphic disorder, preoccupation with drugs in substance use disorder, preoccupation with having serious illness in hypochondriasis, preoccupation with sexual urges in paraphilia, or guilty rumination in presence of major depressive disorder).
- disorder is not due to direct physiologic effects of substance or general medical condition.

- additional specification of "with poor insight" is made if, for most of current episode, person does not recognize that symptoms are excessive or unreasonable.
2% of the global population (one of the highest global burdens of psychiatric disability),
males = females.

usual onset - 10-24 years.

concordance for monogenic twins 80-87% (vs. 47-50% for dizygotic twins)

few pediatric cases are thought to be associated with Group A [β]-hemolytic streptococcal infections - pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder associated with streptococci (PANDAS); H:

early antibiotics.

comorbid psychiatric disorders are common (esp. depression, Gilles de la Tourette's syndrome).

OCD is chronic disorder; without treatment, symptoms may wax and wane but rarely remit spontaneously.

OCD may be quite disabling.

obessions and related compulsions often fall into common categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obsessions</th>
<th>Associated Compulsions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washing, cleaning</td>
<td>Need for symmetry, precise arranging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering, arranging, balancing, straightening until &quot;just right&quot;</td>
<td>Unwanted sexual or aggressive thoughts or images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking, praying, asking for reassurance</td>
<td>Disorders (e.g. gas jets still, doors locked)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Concerns about throwing away something valuable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

individuals often have obsessions and compulsions in several categories.

severity is scored with Yale and Brown OCD Scale (YBOCS) - 40-item scale in which patients answer 20 questions related to obsessions and 20 related to compulsions - high scores are associated with more severe OCD symptoms.

Antidepressants - to target commonly used in Parkinson disease.

FDA approval: bilateral stimulation of

DBS of the nucleus accumbens may be quite disabling.

five percent patients experience symptom reductions of 30-50%; others fail to achieve even this degree of relief.

Cognitive behavioral psychotherapy - first line therapy for OCD (more effective than drugs!!!)

Exposure and response prevention (ERP) - patients are exposed to stimuli that evokes rituals (e.g. touching toilet seat) and are then helped to refrain from engaging in compulsive behavior (e.g. handwashing) for increasing lengths of time while using adaptive techniques to control resulting anxiety.

"Stop thinking" - mental variant of response prevention in which patients repeat obsessive thought until it seems overwhelming and then terminate thought while saying "stop" out loud.

benefit of behavior therapy persists for ≥ 6 years after completion (vs. symptoms usually return rapidly after medication discontinuation).

Psychosurgery - for severe, treatment-refractory OCD (40-60% patients)

To disrupt pathological activity between thalamus and orbitofrontal cortex, and between caudate and lenticular nucleus - a play a significant role in mediating OCD symptoms (functional neuroimaging consistently reports hyperactive cortical circuits in patients with OCD; this aberrant activity appears to be significantly reduced in successfully treated patients)

a) anterior cingulotomy to interrupt orbitofrontal-subcortical circuit (that mediates strong emotions and automatic responses to those emotions) - stereotactic placement of bilateral lesions in anterior cingulate cortex; may be done with SRS – risk of akinetic mutism (anterior cingulate syndrome).

b) anterior capsulotomy - established and most effective procedure; first reported by Talairach in France in 1949; may be done with SRS.

c) deep brain stimulation – targets must be bilateral:

1) anterior limb of internal capsule (ALIC) is approved by FDA (2009) for OCD, i.e. Medtronic Reclame® DBS Therapy.

FDA approval: bilateral stimulation of ALIC as an adjunct to medications and as an alternative to anterior capsulotomy for treatment of chronic, severe, treatment-resistant OCD in adults who have failed at least three SSRIs.

2) bilateral thalamic nucleus (Level I evidence); target 2 mm anterior and 1 mm medial to target commonly used in Parkinson disease.

3) bilateral nucleus accumbens v. YBOCS (ventral capudalventral striatal) (Level II evidence)

PHOBIC DISORDERS

Phobia - persistent, unreasonable (irrational), intense fear in response to presence or anticipation of situations, circumstances, or objects.

although phobia is recognized (first patient) as inappropriate, phobic stimulus is consciously avoided or endured only with intense distress (if not having companion nearby, anxiety may intensify to level of panic attack).

males = 2:3 : 1 (more men seek for social phobia treatment - due to career issues).

CLASSIFICATION

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Antidepressants - to target commonly used in Parkinson disease.

FDA approval: bilateral stimulation of

DBS of the nucleus accumbens may be quite disabling.

five percent patients experience symptom reductions of 30-50%; others fail to achieve even this degree of relief.

Cognitive behavioral psychotherapy - first line therapy for OCD (more effective than drugs!!!)

Exposure and response prevention (ERP) - patients are exposed to stimuli that evokes rituals (e.g. touching toilet seat) and are then helped to refrain from engaging in compulsive behavior (e.g. handwashing) for increasing lengths of time while using adaptive techniques to control resulting anxiety.

"Stop thinking" - mental variant of response prevention in which patients repeat obsessive thought until it seems overwhelming and then terminate thought while saying "stop" out loud.

benefit of behavior therapy persists for ≥ 6 years after completion (vs. symptoms usually return rapidly after medication discontinuation).

Psychosurgery - for severe, treatment-refractory OCD (40-60% patients)

To disrupt pathological activity between thalamus and orbitofrontal cortex, and between caudate and lenticular nucleus - a play a significant role in mediating OCD symptoms (functional neuroimaging consistently reports hyperactive cortical circuits in patients with OCD; this aberrant activity appears to be significantly reduced in successfully treated patients)

a) anterior cingulotomy to interrupt orbitofrontal-subcortical circuit (that mediates strong emotions and automatic responses to those emotions) - stereotactic placement of bilateral lesions in anterior cingulate cortex; may be done with SRS – risk of akinetic mutism (anterior cingulate syndrome).

b) anterior capsulotomy - established and most effective procedure; first reported by Talairach in France in 1949; may be done with SRS.

c) deep brain stimulation – targets must be bilateral:

1) anterior limb of internal capsule (ALIC) is approved by FDA (2009) for OCD, i.e. Medtronic Reclame® DBS Therapy.

FDA approval: bilateral stimulation of ALIC as an adjunct to medications and as an alternative to anterior capsulotomy for treatment of chronic, severe, treatment-resistant OCD in adults who have failed at least three SSRIs.

2) bilateral thalamic nucleus (Level I evidence); target 2 mm anterior and 1 mm medial to target commonly used in Parkinson disease.

3) bilateral nucleus accumbens v. YBOCS (ventral capudalventral striatal) (Level II evidence)
"fear of marklet place") - fear about being in situations from which escape might be difficult or embarrassing or for which help may not be available in event of panic or other forms of discomfort or distress.

Note: 75% patients have panic disorder (PANIC DISORDER WITH AGORAPHOBIA)

- common agoraphobic situation: being away from home, sitting in middle of row of seats in theater, being on bridge or in elevator, traveling in car or airplane.

II. SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

- fear of interpersonal situations (i.e. fear of humiliating oneself in social or performance situations that involve social scrutiny).
  - often patient concerns that his anxiety will be apparent through sweating, blushing, vomiting, or trembling (sometimes as quavering voice) or that ability to keep train of thought or find words to express themselves will be lost.
  - panic attacks may occur in social situations.
  - school refusal is often presentation in children.
  - patients have substantial associated morbidity (suicidal ideation, social isolation, substance abuse).

Agoraphobia and social phobia are also classified as GENERAL PHOBIAS (vs. SPECIFIC PHOBIAS).

Less impairment is observed in specific phobias than in general phobias.

III. SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

- phobia of specific object/situation (often that many normal people may find uncomfortable).

1. Animal type - fear of animals or insects; usually begins in childhood.
2. Natural environmental type - fear of storms, height, etc.; usually begins in childhood.
3. Blood-injection-injury type - fear of seeing blood or injury or receiving injection; often familial and associated with vasovagal syncope (unlike other phobias).
4. Situational type - fear of specific situations (such as elevators, bridges, enclosed places) but without panic disorder or other agoraphobic symptoms; similar to panic disorder with agoraphobia in age of onset, familial aggregation, and sex ratios.

5. Other type - fears of other stimuli:
  - space phobia - fear of falling if not near wall or other means of physical support

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TREATMENT

Cognitive behavioral therapy is treatment of choice - de-linking specific response from stimulus:

Graduated “in vivo” exposure places phobic patients (who are usually accompanied by family member, friend, or physician for reassurance) in situations that evoke anxiety — anxiety is gradually relieved through process called habituation;

- if patient becomes overwhelmingly anxious in phobic situation → start with systematic desensitization; see above.
- relaxation techniques and hypnosis are used to change association between phobic situations and anxiety to association of those situations with relaxation and control.

SOCIAL PHOBIA - cognitive-behavior therapy ± antidepressants (SSRIs*, MAO inhibitors) for at least 6-12 months (→ taper), group therapy, occasionally β-blockers (for short term on pm basis, e.g. before public performance; e.g. PROPRANOOL, 10-40 mg PO is generally preferred). *FDA-approved: PAROXETINE, SELETRAX, VENLAFAXINE

SPECIFIC PHOBIAS - cognitive behavioral therapy.

AGORAPHOBIA - see PANIC DISORDER: >>

PROGNOSIS

- if untreated: AGORAPHOBIA waxes and wanes; may disappear, because some affected people conduct their own form of exposure therapy.

SOCIAL PHOBIA - almost always chronic.

SPECIFIC PHOBIAS - prognosis is variable (it may be easy to avoid situation or object that causes fear).

SCHOOL REFUSAL (s. SCHOOL PHOBIA)

- most common manifestation of pediatric anxiety disorders!!!

SCHOOL REFUSAL: largely supplanted term "SCHOOL PHOBIA."

- children who refuse to go to school have:
  a) separation anxiety (“I am worried that I will never see you again”); separation anxiety suffered by parent also may manifest as school refusal.
  b) social phobia (“I am worried kids will laugh at me”).
  c) panic disorder (e.g. homosexual panic in older child).
  d) schizophrenia.
  e) malingering (e.g. child has not completed homework assignment).
  f) legitimate cause (e.g. gangs, cruel teacher).

- most children state their discomfort in terms of somatic complaints: “I cannot go to school because I have stomachache”; such complaint can lead to some confusion because child is often telling truth - upset stomach, nausea, and headaches often develop in children with anxiety!

- School phobia is "great imitator"!

- after physical disease is excluded, child should be sent back to school immediately, so that school avoidance is not reinforced by staying home.
**POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

- pathological anxiety that develops after exposure to events / circumstances that involved actual death / injury / threat to physical integrity of oneself / others / that evoked intense fear / helplessness / horror
- for children, developmentally inappropriate sexual experience may be considered traumatic event (even if not involved violence or physical injury).
- may appear immediately or may be delayed for ≥ 6 months (PTSD with delayed onset).
- symptoms (last ≥ 1 month / if last ≥ 3 months = chronic PTSD):
  1) reexperiencing initial trauma:
     a) intrusive memories of event.
     b) nightmares about trauma.
     c) spontaneous or triggered flashbacks (dissociative states in which events are relived as if happening).
     e.g. loud noises of fireworks might trigger flashback of being in combat, which in turn might cause patient to seek shelter or procrastinate themselves on ground for protection.
     d) intense psychological distress with internal or external cues to trauma.
     e) physiological reactivity to exposure to trauma cues.
     f) children reexperience event through repetitive play.
  2) avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma / emotional numbing:
     a) avoidance of thoughts or conversation related to trauma.
     b) avoidance of activities, places, or people related to trauma.
     c) amnesia for important trauma-related events.
     d) decreased participation in significant activities.
     e) feeling detached or estranged from others.
     f) restricted affect.
     g) foreshortened sense of future.
     h) Emotional numbing: general lack of interest, social withdrawal, subjective sense of feeling “numb”, foreshortened expectation of future (e.g. “I will not live to see 20”).
  3) hyperarousal:
     a) difficulty staying or falling asleep.
     b) irritability or anger outbursts.
     c) difficulty concentrating.
     d) hypervigilance.
     e) exaggerated startle response.

- often associated with war veterans (= 30% who have spent time in war zone experience PTSD), but also seen in individuals who have witnessed murder, and victims of sexual assault.
- over time, untreated and undertreated individuals are susceptible to deterioration of personal and work relationships and to development of substance abuse or dependence.
- may be at risk of committing suicide.
- AMYGDALA activation is a key feature implicated in PTSD; orbital frontal cortex normally exerts inhibiting effect on this activation.

**TREATMENT**

- many treated individuals recover completely (or nearly completely).
- Exposure psychotherapy (group therapy may be helpful)
- discussion of trauma as means of achieving retroactive mastery.
- meaning reorientations with therapists can be helpful.
- desensitization to situations that evoke reexperiencing or avoidance is often necessary (e.g. flooding, technique involving prolonged exposure to adverse stimuli, has been used with some success on veterans).
- legal trial processes may add more pain.
- Adjunctive techniques - biofeedback, medications:
  a) SSRI (effective for reexperiencing and emotional numbing, not effective for hyperarousal; FDA approved: SERTRALINE, PAROXETINE)
  b) carbamazepine.
  c) β-blockers (control hyperarousal symptoms).
  d) PRAMIN: effective for insomnia in PTSD patients.
- Surgical treatment
  case report of right amygdala laser ablation (for concurrent epilepsy) successfully palliating PTSD.

**ACUTE STRESS DISORDER (ASD)**

- diagnosis new to DSM-IV.
- traumatic event is defined exactly as in PTSD.
- symptoms:
  1) reexperiencing (see PTSD) ≥ 1 month
  2) avoidance (see PTSD) ≥ 1 month
  3) arousal (see PTSD) ≥ 1 month
  4) acute or delayed dissociative symptoms – at least 3 of following (must include a):
     a) emotional numbing (detachment or absence of emotional responsiveness).
     b) decreased awareness of surroundings (e.g. feeling in daze).
     c) derealization.
     d) depersonalization.
     e) dissociative amnesia (unable to remember significant parts of event).
- ASD begins within 1 month of event and lasts 2 days – 4 weeks; if lasts ≥ 1 month → diagnosis is changed to PTSD (ASD may be just variant of, at most, precursor of PTSD).

**TREATMENT**

- to prevent / minimize ASD, some experts recommend *systematic desensitizing* to assist people who were involved in / or witnessed traumatic event as they process what has happened and reflect on its effect; other experts concern that CSD may be quite distressful for some patients, and may even impede natural recovery.
- *called* critical incident stress debriefing (CISD).
- only recommended: drugs – for sleep improvement.

**OTHER**

- anxiety symptoms do not meet criteria for specific DSM-IV diagnosis but still cause significant distress or disability.
- psychotherapy is effective!

**ADJUSTMENT DISORDER**

- psychotherapy for parents and children (≠ short term anxieties) are helpful.
- after exposure to obvious stress*, patients experience anxiety / depression / impairment in excess of that which would normally be expected.
  
*that most people would consider upsetting but not life-threatening (unlike is stress disorders); divorce and geographic relocation are examples
  
- symptoms appear soon (within 3 months) after event (i.e. extreme acute response to environmental stress)
  
- symptoms resolve within 6 months after stress is over.

SITUATIONAL ANXIETY
- even relatively minor situation is overwhelming because it recalls other situations in which individual was unable to cope or that aroused unresolved conflict.
- relatively well-adjusted patient may experience only transient symptoms, whereas underlying psychosis may be precipitated in a more marginally compensated patient.

ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH
- even nontfatal illnesses may remind individuals of their mortality.
- reassure that patient will not be left alone in pain.

ANXIETY ABOUT MUTILATION, LOSS OF PROWESS, LOSS OF ATTRACTIVENESS
- common in patients who feel that love, approval, and self-esteem are dependent on their strength or beauty.
- patients become anxious if illness threatens their appearance or prowess.
- patients may attempt self-reassurance by demonstrating attractiveness (e.g. by behaving seductively) or strength (e.g. by exercising conspicuously) in inappropriate or even dangerous ways.

ANXIETY ABOUT LOSS OF SELF-ESTEEM
- common in patients whose self-esteem is fragile.
- patients experience illness as imperfection, weakness, or failure — attempts to bolster sense of self-worth by boasting about importance and superiority (e.g. insisting on being treated only by most senior or well-known physician and treating others as worthless inferiors).
- patient should be approached with appropriate deference (e.g. telephone for patient in intensive care unit during acute illness should be granted).

SEPARATION ANXIETY
- persistent, intense, and developmentally inappropriate fear of separation from major attachment figure (e.g. mother in pediatric patients).
  
- patient groups:
  
a) children > 24 months (N.B. separation anxiety is normal emotion in children 8-24 months — because of incomplete memory and no sense of time, children fear that departure of their parents is permanent)
  
b) regressed adults (function psychologically more as children than as adults) become frightened when they are separated from important caregivers.
  
- commonly encountered in physically ill people, as well as in overly dependent and individuals and some patients with psychotic and personality disorders.
- when separation is forced, patients are distressedly preoccupied with reunification.
- separation distress may be expressed directly (as anxiety) or indirectly (complaints of pain, when left alone - calls for assistance with trivial matters, in children - school refusal).
- separation scenes are typically painful for both mother and child.
  
- child often wails and pleads with such desperation that mother is unable to leave, child often develops somatic complaints.
  
- child's demeanor is normal when mother is present (this can give false impression that problem is of minor consequence).

MANAGEMENT
- behavioral therapy + SSRIs.
  
- regular separations are systematically enforced.
  
- goodbyes should be kept as brief as possible (parent should leave without responding at length to child's crying).
  
- separation anxiety is worse when child is hungry or tired (feeding child and letting him nap before leaving may help).
  
- encourage person with whom parents are leaving child to create distractions.
  
- successfully treated children are prone to relapses after holidays.
  
- for acutely hospitalized patients:
  
- family and close friends should be encouraged to be with patient as much as possible, and unrestricted visiting should be allowed.
  
- nursing staff should be encouraged to visit patient frequently for brief periods before patient asks for help to avoid teaching patient that only way not to be left alone is to complain (patient's room should be close to nurse's station to facilitate frequent, brief visits.
  
- roommate should be provided.

STRANGER ANXIETY
- patients who suffer from separation anxiety also may react adversely to unfamiliar people (e.g. hospitalized patient feels distress at hospital staff shift changes).
- normal in children 8-24 months - manifested by crying when unfamiliar person approaches (even grandparents may suddenly be viewed as strangers).

MANAGEMENT
- if stranger (e.g. grandparent) is coming to watch child for few days while parents go away, he should arrive day or two early and spend some time with family.
- for acutely hospitalized patients:
  
- as much continuity in personnel as possible (e.g. same nurse to patient each day).
  
- unfamiliar visitors should be limited, changes in roommates minimized.

ANXIETY ABOUT LOSS OF CONTROL
- illness / hospitalization may be threatening to people who have strong need to feel in complete control of their life and environment.
- patient may attempt to gain sense of control by refusing to comply with physician's advice, by becoming excessively demanding, by making physician feel helpless, or by otherwise asserting control over those who are in caregiving role or who are healthy.
- management patient should be allowed as much control as possible over his treatment (e.g. patient should be consulted about which treatment schedules seem most reasonable to him).

ANXIETY ABOUT DEPENDENCY
- patients who fear loss of control also commonly have anxiety about being dependent on others.
- fear of dependency is common in people whose normal dependency needs were not met in childhood (e.g. because of parental illness or unavailability).
- patients may become hostile toward potential caregivers, may ignore signs of increasing illness.
- management: reassure that illness and dependency required by it are temporary.

**ANXIETY ABOUT INTIMACY**
- patients with concerns about dependency may also be afraid of becoming too close emotionally to caregivers or loved ones.
- to protect themselves, they maintain greater-than-normal emotional distance or even hostility.
- management: intimacy should not be forced; patient's sense of formality (e.g. by always using patient's last name) should be respected.

**ANXIETY ABOUT BEING PUNISHED**
- patients with underlying sense of guilt about real or imagined transgressions may have conscious or unconscious expectation of punishment.
- patients attempt to relieve guilt (or avoid worry about when they will be punished) by self-inflicted punishment (e.g. through unhappy marriage, repeated accidents, not recovering from illness, and other self-destructive behaviors).
- management: attempt to uncover source of their guilt (expressive psychotherapy).

**SIGNAL ANXIETY**
- when awareness of previously unconscious, unresolved psychological conflict is stimulated by some external occurrence (e.g. patient had mixed feelings about parent and patient's age is same as that of parent at time of death), anxiety may signal emergence of conflict.
- this anxiety calls forth unconscious psychological defenses (ego defenses) - help to avoid anxiety by keeping conflict out of patient's awareness:
  a. repression (forgetting) - automatic process by which memories, thoughts, feelings are excluded from awareness.
  b. rationalization - explaining away psychologically meaningful data (e.g. "I'm anxious only because of low blood sugar").
  c. reaction formation - feeling opposite of one's true emotion in order not to be aware of it (e.g. experiencing excessive affection toward someone who actually elicits hostility).
  d. isolation of affect - experiencing content of thought without its associated emotions.
  e. denial - remaining unaware of some aspect of reality (e.g. feeling that one does not have to be afraid of consequences of illness because one is not really ill).
  f. projection - attributing one's own motives to someone else.
  g. projective identification - incompletely projecting intense emotional state (usually anger) onto another individual while inducing emotion in object of projection through provoking behavior → patient then experiences original emotion, but he feels that only reason he has emotion or thought is that he is attempting to protect himself from other individual's affect.
- management: attempt to resolve underlying conflict.
  - when patients cannot tolerate awareness of their motives, they should be helped to develop less disabling defenses against them (e.g. isolation of affect rather than denial of it, or denial of anxiety rather than denial of situation that causes it).
  - behavioral and adjunctive measures (e.g. relaxation training) may help lessen signal anxiety.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** for ch. “Psychiatry” → follow this link >>

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