

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDERS

CC7: Psychopathology
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ANXIETY DISORDER

- Group of psychopathological problems
- Intensity of the disorders can also vary tremendously
- ***Anxiety disorder is characterized by anxious and fearful feeling most of the time***
- In some cases, the anxious feelings may be so uncomfortable that the person may stop routine activities, Can't lead normal lives (Koury & Rapaport, 2007).
- At times, anxiety is so intense that terrify and immobilize the person.
- Discomfort is too severe or too frequent, lasts too long, or is triggered too easily.

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

- Defined as “*A disorder marked by persistent and excessive feelings of anxiety and worry about numerous events and activities*”
- “Worry” is the central characteristic in GAD,
- Worry about - family, finances, work, and personal illness.
- In addition, 91% of the patients reported “worrying excessively about minor things,”
- Worries are significantly less controllable / stoppable/ preventable than the normal people.
- Sometimes described as *free-floating anxiety*
- More common in females. More adults than children
- May emerge at any age, generally begins around the mid teens to early 20s.

GAD – DIAGNOSIS _ DSM-IV-TR CRITERIA

- Excessive anxiety and worry at least 50 percent of days about a range of issues
- The person finds it hard to control the worry
- The worry is sustained for at least six months
- Significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- The anxiety and worry are associated with at least three of the following:
 1. restlessness
 2. being easily fatigued
 3. difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
 4. irritability
 5. muscle tension
 6. sleep disturbance

ETIOLOGY _GAD

1. **Genetic Factors**

- Twin studies demonstrated a moderate genetic influence in GAD; around 30% of the variance was attributable to genetic factors (Kendler et al., 1995).
- Studies :biological relatives of persons with GAD are more likely than nonrelatives to have the disorder (Wetherell et al., 2006)
- Twin Studies -Identical twin, opposed to a fraternal twin, are more likely to have the disorder (APA, 2000).

ETIOLOGY _GAD

2. Neurobiological Factors

- Some researchers believe that generalized anxiety disorder may also be the result of **low serotonin** (neurotransmitter) activity.
- Role of biochemical - **benzodiazepine** receptor complex
- The neurotransmitter Gammaaminobutyric acid (**GABA**), whose low activity has been linked to.
- **Elevated Fear Circuit**: A set of brain structures (Thalamus, Cingulate Gyrus, Basal Ganglia, Hippocampus , amygdala etc) called the “**fear circuit**”, tends to be activated (Elevated activity) when people are feeling anxious or fearful (Malizia, 2003).

ETIOLOGY _GAD

3. Psychological Factors

- **Information Processing** - Tendency to interpret ambiguous information as threatening.
- There is also considerable evidence to suggest that persons with GAD have an **attentional bias** toward threatening cues
- **4. Personality: Neuroticism** is a personality trait defined by the tendency to react to events with greater than average negative affect
 - People with high levels of neuroticism were more than twice as likely to develop anxiety disorder as those with low neuroticism

ETIOLOGY _GAD

4. **Socio-cultural factors**

- GAD is more common among **racial/ethnic minorities** and people of **low socio-economic status** (Kessler et al., 2004).
- have more worry about (unsafe living conditions, lower income, poor health care, and therefore more medical conditions).

TREATMENT _GAD

1. Psychological Techniques

- ❑ **Relaxation Training** –
 - ❑ The notion is physical relaxation will lead to a state of psychological relaxation
 - ❑ Basis is that Two mental states (relaxation and anxiety) can not go simultaneously in one person and stronger will prevail.
 - ❑ **Meditation**, often seem to be equally effective (Bourne et al., 2004)

TREATMENT _GAD

- ❑ **Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT)**
 - ❑ CBT is more effective in reducing GAD (Durham et al., 1994),
 - ❑ CBT - is a talking therapy and try to change the way you think and behave.
 - ❑ CBT is based on the concept that your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and actions are interconnected, and that negative thoughts and feelings can trap you in a vicious cycle.
 - ❑ CBT aims to help you deal with overwhelming problems in a more positive way by breaking them down into smaller parts.

TREATMENT _GAD

2. Pharmacological Treatment

- ❑ The most widely used drugs have been **benzodiazepines** (The most common group of anti-anxiety drugs, which includes *Valium and Xanax*), and the average effect size improvement is around 0.7 (Gould et al., 1997).
- ❑ Currently **serotonin-enhancing antidepressants** are used to treat GAD than the GABA-enhancing benzodiazepines