

Anxiety Disorders

CURRENT CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Anxiety Disorders **A Pocket Guide** **for Primary Care**

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 **Humana Press**

© 2008 Humana Press
999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208
Totowa, New Jersey 07512

humanapress.com

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Production Editor: Michele Seugling

Cover design by Nancy Fallatt

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Printed in the United States of America. 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

978-1-59745-263-2 (e-book)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2007934680

Series Editor's Introduction

Anxiety disorders affect more than 40 million adults in the United States, or approximately 18% of the population¹. Most of the treatment of anxiety disorders is prescribed by family doctors and internists. Untreated anxiety disorders lead to a great deal of unnecessary stress, fear, and uncertainty among a large number of patients and their families. Anxiety disorders encompass a number of different syndromes, including generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, adjustment disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias.

In the primary care physicians office, anxiety often manifests as patients present with multiple somatic symptoms, and it takes a high level of suspicion, skill, kindness, and finesse to identify and address anxiety when patients are not aware that their symptoms stem from anxiety. Less often, patients come into the office seeking treatment with specific concerns about anxiety. In a recent survey, one-third of family physicians indicated a high degree of need for more continuing medical education about anxiety disorders and 78% indicated that they have a moderate or high need for continuing education about anxiety.

Anxiety Disorders, by Drs. John R. Vanin and James D. Helsley, fills an important void as a concise yet complete overview for primary care physicians of the most current thinking on the diagnosis and treatment of anxiety. The chapters are intelligently written with an emphasis on clinically relevant, evidence-based information that is useful in the treatment of our patients. There are chapters on psychopharmacology, psychotherapy, and each of the major anxiety disorders. Each chapter reviews the evidence supporting best practices in the treatment of each anxiety disorder so that the reader understands the full range of options available for effective care. It is a book that deserves to be on the shelf of all primary care physicians.

Neil S. Skolnik, MD

¹U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. National Institute of Mental Health – Anxiety Disorders. 2006 NIH Publication N. 06-3879

Foreword

As a practicing psychiatrist for nearly thirty years, I have known and worked with primary care practitioners who recognize and treat patients with mental disorders as well as any psychiatrist. I have also known primary care practitioners who have little interest in psychiatric issues as well as those who have considerable difficulty conceptualizing, much less verbalizing, treatment options for patients with these disorders. This is not meant to be a criticism. Practitioners who are not interested in mental health issues often have such a diverse and heavy general medical patient demand that excluding psychiatric disorders seems to be the least harmful option.

Although the exclusion of psychiatric disorders is completely understandable, it is impractical to disregard such a growing primary care practice issue. Psychiatric disorders affect all parts of the body and many aspects of everyday life functioning. Understanding how to better recognize, diagnose, and treat common mental disorders such as the anxiety disorders can actually help relieve patient demand and overall costs by correcting problems before they manifest themselves throughout all the possible avenues of care.

The ultimate goal of medical practice is to relieve suffering and make our diagnostic skills and treatment options the best available for our patients. This pocket guide is a tremendous addition for those who are interested in increasing their knowledge of mental health, particularly the recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of anxiety disorders. The details will expand the primary care practitioner's fund of knowledge and level of comfort regarding this large, yet elusive and complicated, segment of primary care. The material is thought provoking for practitioners who have had little or no experience in diagnosing and treating common anxiety disorders as well as for practitioners who are seasoned and regularly treat anxiety disorders and want to expand their knowledge base.

The quality of patient care will increase exponentially for clinicians who absorb the information that this book provides. This pocket guide is a real treat and long overdue!

David M. Morgan

Preface

According to the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, the 12-month prevalence of adults in the United States with any mental disorder seen by a general medical professional is greater than 22% [1]. The level of disability among primary care patients with mental disorders is higher than many practitioners suspect, and can be greater than the disabilities from chronic general medical conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, and back pain [2]. Anxiety disorders affect over one fourth of U.S. adults at some point during their lifetime [3]. In any 12-month period, nearly one fourth of patients with anxiety disorders are treated by a general medical professional [1], and these patients account for at least 10% of primary care visits [4].

This book is designed to help the primary care practitioner recognize, diagnose, and manage anxiety disorders in a busy clinical practice. The first several chapters give an overview of anxiety and the anxiety disorders, and provide the practitioner with practical information and techniques regarding the psychiatric evaluation and mental status examination in a primary care practice. Extremely effective modalities are available for the management of common mental disorders, including the anxiety disorders. The goal of treatment is not simply improvement but remission of symptoms and restoration of function. Some mental disorders, in fact, can be more effectively treated than hypertension or coronary heart disease [2]. This pocket guide includes helpful chapters on psychopharmacology, psychopharmacotherapy, and psychological treatment for the anxiety disorders.

Chapters relating to anxiety and the common anxiety disorders address adjustment disorder with anxiety, panic disorder, specific phobia, social phobia (social anxiety disorder), obsessive-compulsive disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder. Anxiety symptoms may occur due to general medical conditions, and this pocket guide contains a chapter dealing with common, potentially impairing conditions. Individuals with anxiety disorders may also suffer from coexisting mental disorders and are likely to have somatic or physical complaints. These complaints often mask the underlying problem and can lead to missed diagnoses, frustration, and

high utilization of medical services [4]. The chapter on anxiety disorders and comorbidity reviews common coexisting mental disorders such as clinical depression and substance abuse. There are an estimated 78 million baby boomers in the U.S., and the oldest are now approaching retirement age [5]. Thus, there is a growing interest in geriatric anxiety disorders, and the identification and management of these disorders is vital. The chapter on geriatric anxiety disorders addresses the recognition, diagnosis, and management of anxiety disorders in the senior population and discusses several of the common medical disorders that may present with anxiety symptoms.

Timely consideration of anxiety disorders is important for appropriate management in a primary care practice. This pocket guide is intended to be a quick and handy resource for daily clinical practice as well as a practical source of information to augment other standard references and electronic media. Recommendations on collaboration and consultation with mental health professionals are provided, including resource information and a glossary of terms pertinent to the anxiety disorders.

The chapter authors have a combined clinical experience of over a century in the fields of mental health, primary care, education, and administrative areas. They have worked in multiple settings, including college health service, private general practice, academic inpatient and outpatient practice, military service, and community mental health centers. They are eager to share information about anxiety disorders from current research as well as from their experiences in the clinical trenches.

Becoming more comfortable with the diagnosis and treatment of the various anxiety disorders can be most rewarding for practitioners as well as for patients and their families. Appropriate management of anxiety disorders can make the difference between a patient feeling well with a good quality of life and living a life riddled with fear, tension, panic, avoidance, or somatic concerns. I hope that this pocket guide will provide information that is quick, interesting, practical, easy to read, and concise to help ease anxiety symptoms in your patients and, for that matter, in yourselves!

John R. Vanin, MD, DFAPA

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Acknowledgments

Writing this pocket guide was an exciting, fulfilling, and challenging endeavor. We could not have accomplished this task without the support and guidance of many individuals. We both want to thank our lovely wives, Sandra and Vickie, for their love, support, and patience. They were always available for consultation and constantly helped to advance our writing, word processing, and editorial skills. We thank our children, family, friends, colleagues, and administrative staff for their constant encouragement and wonderful ideas. We both lost our fathers during the early phase of writing this book. These kind, wise men always taught us to do our best and pursue our dreams. We wish to dedicate this book to them and to our mothers who taught us to help others and share our knowledge.

A special thank you is extended to Richard Lansing, executive director for new project development, and the other editors and staff at Humana Press for their support, guidance, and positive attitudes during this long but most rewarding project. And finally, many thanks to the practitioners who read and use this pocket guide, for allowing us an opportunity to contribute some practical and scientific information for use in the daily care of their patients who suffer from the most common psychiatric disorders—the anxiety disorders.

J. R. Vanin and J. D. Helsley

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