

Title: Anxiety Disorders

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Date: 12 Aug 2009

Key words:

Generalized anxiety disorder; alternative treatment; complementary treatment; acupuncture; kava; meditation; autogenic training

Abstract:

There exists effective complementary and alternative treatments to generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Studies have shown that a large percentage of people decide to self-treat their anxiety before seeking a physician's assistance. Thus, studies are needed to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of complementary and alternative therapies of GAD.

Several studies have shown that effective treatments of GAD include kava, relaxation training, acupuncture, meditation, and autogenic training. Studies have also shown that complementary therapies are effective for more specific anxiety disorders, such as panic disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

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COMPLEMENTARY / ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS

Because many people prefer to treat anxiety by themselves before seeking a physician's help, it is important to review common alternative treatments. Below is a short overview of effective complementary therapies.

Kava

Studies have shown that extracts from the root of this plant have been successfully used for generalized anxiety. Its use is limited by rare cases of liver toxicity.

Relaxation Training

Some studies have shown that relaxation training is effective for GAD. This training involves teaching people to identify and relax certain muscle groups.

Acupuncture

This is a therapy where needles are inserted to certain points of energy throughout the body. There have been good studies showing the effectiveness of acupuncture.

Meditation

Meditation is a process of focusing the mind into a deep state of relaxation or awareness. This is a state that is not compatible with anxiety. Several studies have shown the effectiveness of meditation.

Autogenic Training

This treatment teaches an individual to passively concentrate on the heaviness of one's breathing, warmth of one's arms and legs, and the rhythm of breathing and heartbeat. There is some evidence showing the effectiveness of autogenic training.

For more information on anxiety:

The Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/generalized-anxiety-disorder/DS00502>

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ANXIETY DISORDERS

Diagnosis and Treatments

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FAMILY MEDICINE CLERKSHIP

PATIENT EDUCATION TOOL

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is when you feel nervous or worried. For the most part, this is a normal part of our lives. It can be a good thing, motivating us to study for a difficult test or go to work to make a living. When there is no identifiable cause of anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is sometimes the diagnosis.

DO I HAVE GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER?

Diagnosis of GAD is made by a professional when a person has uncontrollable worry for 6 months that is not related to a specific person, situation, or event. Other symptoms can include:

- Sleeping troubles
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating

6.8 million Americans suffer from generalized anxiety disorder. It usually affects and can occur any point during life.

TRADITIONAL TREATMENT

Typically, treatment of generalized anxiety disorders is divided into two categories: medication and cognitive-behavioral therapy. Treatment of GAD can combine the two categories, and an appropriate treatment is decided through discussion between the patient and his or her physician.

Medication

There are several medications used in the treatment of anxiety. Typically, a physician prescribes the drugs used for GAD. These aren't a cure for anxiety. They help control the symptoms. Many medications have side effects, and some of them can be quite serious. Two categories of drugs usually used for GAD are "Anti-anxiety Medications" and "Antidepressants".

Anti-anxiety drugs include Valium, Xanax, and Ativan. These medications are useful because they act quickly to relieve symptoms. The main problem is that they can be addicting. Other side effects include drowsiness and balance problems. Buspirone is a newer drug for GAD that takes longer to work but is not addicting. Its side effects include dizziness and nausea.

Antidepressants are drugs that are mainly used for depression, but they have been shown to be effective for other things, such as GAD. These typically take 4-6 weeks to work. Side effects include nausea, sexual dysfunction, and headache.

Cognitive-behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Also called psychotherapy, CBT is repeated sessions with a therapist. The goal is to identify thinking patterns that are the source of the anxiety and then to change the way you think and behave. This is a long-term treatment that works on allowing a person with GAD to control his or her fears and overcome anxiety.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER TREATMENTS?

Many people with anxiety often try to treat themselves before seeking a professional. Throughout the years, many different treatments have claimed to help anxiety. These range from plant-based remedies, like St. John's wort, to Eastern medicines, such as acupuncture. Reliable medical studies are beginning to evaluate the effectiveness of non-traditional treatments (also called alternative/complementary treatments).