

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!

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