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Efficacy Of Homoeopathic Medicine And A Holistic Way To Approach Fear And Anxiety Disorders

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ABSTRACT

Fear, as an adaptive emotion, triggers the activation of defensive resources when faced with a perceived threat or danger. Fear and anxiety are closely related, phylogenetically adaptive emotions experienced in response to near and threat or a more distant future threat.

Anxiety and Fear both are alerting signals that acts warning⁽¹⁾ of an internal and external threat⁽¹⁾

Anxiety can be conceptualized as a normal and adaptive response that has life saving qualities and warns of threats of bodily damage, pain, helplessness, possible punishment or the frustration of social and bodily needs

This helps to throw some light on the management of different fears, phobias, anxieties, with the help of homeopathy.

KEYWORDS

Anxiety Disorder

Fears

PTSD

OCD

Homeopathy

Abbreviations:

PTSD – Post traumatic stress disorder

OCD – Obsessive compulsive disorder

GAD – Generalized anxiety disorder

DSM-V – Diagnostic and statistical manner of mental disorders

Introduction

Anxiety is a psychological and physiological and behavioral state induced in humans by threat to well-being or survival either actual or potential. It is characterized by increased arousal, expectancy, autonomic and neuroendocrine activation and specific behavioral patterns. It includes most as a diffuse, unpleasant, vague sense of apprehension, often accompanied by autonomic symptoms such as headache, perspiration, palpitations, tightness in the chest, mild stomach discomfort, and restlessness, indicated by an inability to sit or stand still for long.^[1]

Fear and anxiety:

Anxiety functions as a signaling alert, indicating the potential presence of imminent danger and empowering an individual to implement measures for addressing and managing a perceived threat. Fear is a similar alerting signal, but it should be differentiated from anxiety. Fear is a response to a known, external, definite, or non conflictual threat; anxiety is a response to a threat that is unknown, internal, vague, or conflictual.^[1]

Clinical features

Anxiety has two components: the awareness of the physiological sensations (e.g., palpitation and sweating) and the awareness of being nervous or frightened. A feeling of shame may increase anxiety. Others will recognize that I am frightened. Many persons are astonished to find out that others are not aware of their anxiety or if they are, do not appreciate its intensity.

Beyond its impact on motor and visceral responses, anxiety extends its influence to cognitive domains, affecting thinking, perception, and learning. Anxiety has the propensity to induce confusion and distortions in perception, encompassing alterations not only in the perception of time and space but also in the recognition of individuals and the interpretation of events.

These alterations can interfere with learning by lowering the concentration, further reducing recall, and impairing the ability to relate one item to another - that is, to make associations:^[1]

Classification of Anxiety Disorder^[2]

1. Generalized anxiety disorder(GAD)
2. Panic disorder(PD)
3. Phobic disorder(PD)
4. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
5. Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER:

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) have persistent excessive or unrealistic worry associated with muscle tension, impaired concentration, autonomic arousal, feeling on edge or restless, and insomnia. It is usually before age 20 years, and a history of childhood fears and social inhibition may be present.

The distress, worry, or physical manifestations of anxiety result in noteworthy impairment or distress in crucial areas of social, occupational, or other essential aspects of functioning. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiologic effects of a substance (e.g : drug abuse, abused medication) or any general medical condition (e.g : hyperthyroidism) and does not occur usually during a mood disorder, a psychotic disorder, or a pervasive developmental disorder.

PANIC DISORDER:

Presence of recurrent and unpredictable panic attacks, which are distinct episodes of intense fear and discomfort associated with physical symptoms including sweating, shortness of breath, chest pain, palpitations, dizziness, trembling, fear of impending doom or death. Panic attacks have a sudden onset. Generally it resolves over a period of an hour, and they occur in an unexpected fashion. Cause of panic disorder is unknown but sometimes it involves a genetic predisposition factor, autonomic responsivity, and social learnings.

PHOBIC DISORDER:

The characteristic feature of phobic disorders is marked with persistent fear of particular objects or situations, exposure to that results in a sudden anxiety reaction. The patient avoids the phobic stimulus that impairs occupational or social functioning. Common phobias include fear of heights(Acrophobia), fear of closed spaces (claustrophobia), fear of flying. Entophobia fear of insects, animals.^[2]

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER:

This type of anxiety disorder is seen after exposure to extreme traumatic events such as the threat of personal death or injury or the death of a loved one. This type of reaction may occur shortly after the trauma or be delayed and subject to recurrence. Any disasters, terrorist activity, severe accidents, violent deaths, etc. These changes facilitate the emphasis of fear-based memories. It was hypothesis in PTSD has excessive release of norepinephrine from the locus coeruleus in response to stress and increased noradrenergic activity at projection sites in the hippocampus and amygdala. Recurrent intrusive memories about trauma, sleep disturbance, especially nightmares. Symptoms of autonomic arousal like anxiety, palpitation, enhanced startle, emotional blunting and avoidance of situations evoking traumatic memories. The condition last for month or years that can trigger back memories of trauma.^[2]

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Obsessive compulsive disorder(OCD) is common, chronic and long-lasting disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts(obsessions) and behaviors(compulsions) that he or she feels the urge to repeat over and over.Fears of contamination and germs. He repeatedly does handwashing, repeatedly counting, and he will check and recheck such actions as whether a door is locked.The most frequent being depression, other anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and tics.Obsessional rumination,obsessional images^[2]

Role of Homoeopathy :

Homeopathy plays a distinctive role in addressing anxiety disorders by employing a holistic approach that aims to treat the individual as a whole, taking into account physical, mental, and emotional aspects.

Homoeopathy recognizes the interconnectedness of physical and mental well-being. The treatment is not just focused on alleviating symptoms but on addressing the underlying imbalances contributing to anxiety.

Homoeopathic remedies are often administered in highly diluted forms. This gentle approach is believed to stimulate the vital force without causing adverse effects.

Homeopathy offers a potential avenue for managing cases of anxiety disorders by meticulously documenting individual cases in accordance with the case-taking principles outlined by Dr. Samuel Hahnemann in Organon aphorisms 83 to 104 & aphorisms 210 to 230.

Following the case-taking process, the paramount focus lies in the individualization of both the disease and the patient, a crucial step for determining the most fitting similimum.

Disease individualization, especially in the realm of psychiatric diagnoses, aligns with the DSM-5 framework, which provides clinicians with a standardized language for communication and establishes reliable diagnoses crucial for mental disorder research.

The selection of homeopathic medicines predominantly centers on mental symptoms, underlining the importance of considering the patient's unique mental and emotional state in the remedy selection process.

Repertorial approach:

Kent's Repertory^[3]

MIND, Anxiety suicidal : Aur, caust, dros, hepar, merc, nux, play, puls, rhus, staphy

MIND, ANXIETY, BAD news, ailments from : CALC., GELS. MIND, FASTIDIOUS : Ars., nux-v.

MIND, FEAR, bad news hearing : calc-p, dros, nat-p

MIND, FEAR, Narrow place, in- Arg. Nit

DELUSIONS, imaginations, hallucinations, illusions: ARG-N.,BELL., CANN-I., COCC., HYOS., IGN., LACH.,PETR., PH-AC., SABAD., STRAM., SULPH.

MIND, Anxiety trifles about :Anac, ars, calc, china, cocc, con, ferr, sili.

Boger's Repertory^[4] :

MIND, Fearsome, fright, etc. – Acon, ars, phos

MIND, Frightened or startled easily – ign

MIND, Fastidious – Ars., Graph., Nux v.

MIND, thought frightful : caust, lyssin, rhus, visc

Phatak's Repertory^[5] :

Future, misfortune, forebodings: Acon; Ars; calc; psor; Puls

Ideas compelling- Lach., Nit.ac

Ideas fixed: Anac; Ars+; Chin; Hell; Nat-m; Saba; Stan; Sul; Thu

Delusion Spectre,ghost, sees– Med.

FEAR, Fright, of, remains- Op.

O.E. Boericke's Repertory^[6] :

MIND, fear dread dark : Acon. apis, ars, aurum, dig, nitacid, nux, phos, plat, psor, syphil.

MIND, Fright, fear- Acon., Apis, Aur., Bell., Gels., Hyos., Hyper., Ign., Nat. m., Morph., Op., Puls., Samb., Ver.alb

MIND, Fear,Space (agoraphobia)- Acon., Arg. n., Arn., Calc. c., Hydroc. ac., Nux

MIND, Fear,Water (hydrophobia)- Agave, Anag., Ant. c., Bell., Canth., Hyos., Lach., Laur., Lyssin, Stram., Sul.,

MIND, Fear, dread, Crossing streets, crowds,excitement -- Acon., Hydroc. ac., Plat.

MIND, NIGHT-TERRORS- Acon., Aur. br., Calc. c., Cham., Cic., Cina, Chloral., Cyrip., Kali br., Kali p., Scutel., Solan. n., Stram., Tub., Zinc. m.

Therapeutic approach^[6,7] :

Aconitum napellus :

Profound fear and anxiety in the mind, coupled with heightened nervous excitability; reluctance to venture outdoors, enter crowded places with excitement or numerous people, or cross the street. The facial expression mirrors this fear; life is marred by a pervasive sense of dread; convinced that the ailment will result in fatality; anticipates the specific day of demise; experiences fear of death during pregnancy. Restless and anxious, executing tasks hastily; compelled to frequently change position; easily startled by everything.

Arsenicum album:

Great anxiety and agonizing fear and restlessness accompany every ailment however trivial. Mentally restless, but physically he is too weak to move about; cannot rest in any place: changing places continually; wants to be moved from one bed to another, and lies now here now there. Anxious fear of death; thinks it is incurable, is surely going to die; dread of death, when alone, or, going to bed. when alone, or, going to bed. Attacks of anxiety at night driving out of bed, < after midnight. Forebodings, predicts the time of death. Feels as if what had just been done were a dream. Fitful moods; laughing, singing, then sad and fearful.

Argentum nitricum

Tormented by strange ideas and emotions. Nervous impulsive and hurried, yet timid and anxious. Fearsome. Dreads ordeals. Fear, or impending evil, of crowds, passing a certain point, of high buildings, of dark. Loss of ambition. Impulse to jump while crossing a bridge; or looking out of the window. Loss of memory. Time passes slowly; time seems short, wants to do things in a hurry, must walk fast etc. Weeps, says he is lost beyond hope. Everything seems changed. Irrational; does strange things and comes to strange conclusions; does foolish things. Incoherence. Childish talk. Talks about his sufferings

Aurum metallicum:

Intense hopeless depression; and disgust of life. Talk of committing suicide. Suicidal anguish. Peevish and vehement on least contradiction, or cheerful alternately. Brooding melancholy; alternating with irritability or moroseness. Feeling of condemnation and utter worthlessness. Weeping, praying and self reproaching from heart disease. Loquacity. Rapid questioning, without waiting for a reply. Fears the least noise. self reproach; self criticism. Changing moods. She does everything wrong; thinks had neglected something; her friends. her duty. Indisposed to talk. Hateful and quarrelsome. Future looks dark.

Calcarea carbonicum :

Confused, misplaces words and expresses himself wrongly. Sad. Apathetic, taciturn. Indolent; suddenly. Visions; of fire; murder, rats and mice, in delirium. Melancholy; desire to weep, to go home. Hopeless of ever getting well. Suspicious; thinks people look at him suspiciously, and he looks at them suspiciously. Inability to apply himself.

Natrum muriaticum :

Anxiety, Apprehension. Fear or dreams of robbers. Awkward; in talking; hasty; drops things from nervous weakness. Hateful; to persons who had offended him. Detests consolation or fuss. Sad, during menses; without cause. Reserved. Easily angered aggravation if consoled. Hypochondriac. Wants to be alone to cry. Weeps involuntarily, without cause or can't weep. Cheerful, laughs, signs, dances, alternating sadness. Dwells on past unpleasant memories.

Staphysagria :

Ailments from reserved displeasure. Very sensitive to what others say about her. Sadness without any cause; with irritability. Ill effects after scolding or punishment in children. Want of self control. Fear; afraid of his shadow. Hypochondriasis. Imagines insults. Irritable, nervous, excitable and violent. Great indignation about the things done by others or by himself; grieves about the consequences. Believes he will lose his fortune, his wife will leave him.

Conclusion:

It emphasizes anxiety disorders as the exquisite interplay of genetic and experiential factors. However, it also clearly indicates that traumatic life events and stress are also etiologically important. Thus, the study of anxiety disorders presents a scope to understand the relation between nature and aetiology of mental disorders. The distinction between anxiety and fear may be difficult to understand because fear can also be caused by an unconscious, repressed, internal object displaced to another object in the external world. According to post-Freudian psychoanalytic formulations, the separation of fear and anxiety is psychologically justifiable. A double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled, pilot trial [8] was conducted on 62 patients of generalised anxiety disorder at National Institute of Homoeopathy, Kolkata, indicating small but positive directions favouring homoeopathy. Hence, more study needs to be conducted to show the efficacy of homoeopathy in such cases of anxiety disorders and managing different fears and phobias.

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