



Health Care Forum

Researchers May Find Answers To Generalized Anxiety Disorder

(NAPSA)—Thanks to recent research, many people may soon have a lot less to worry about.

This is important because a significant fraction of the world's population is plagued by chronic and excessive anxiety so severe many consider it more disabling than lung disease, sleep disorders, drug addiction or major depression. This is one of the major findings announced at the 154th annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association by the Global Research on Anxiety and Depression (GRAD) Network, a recently-formed consortium of leading psychiatric epidemiologists and clinical researchers.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a chronic and debilitating condition characterized by severe and persistent anxiety, worry, tension and hypervigilance. Recent studies addressed GAD's emergence as a social health problem that affects approximately five percent of the population. Perhaps even more disturbing is the finding that less than 20 percent of GAD patients receive proper care, probably because the disorder is so difficult to diagnose.

"GAD is a common, but often misunderstood anxiety disorder that robs sufferers of a normal, healthy life at home and at work," said Ronald Kessler, Ph.D., professor of Health Care Policy, Harvard Medical School. "Although GAD symptoms take a much larger toll

How Do You Know If You Have GAD?

Are you plagued by excessive worry or constant anxiety? Have these feelings persisted for a period of six months or longer?

If so, you may have GAD if you have also experienced three or more of the following symptoms, and they cannot be explained by another psychiatric or medical condition.

- Does it seem like your life is just one tense moment after another?
- Do you often:
 - feel irritable?
 - feel restless, keyed-up or on edge?
 - have difficulty concentrating?
 - have trouble sleeping?
 - feel exhausted, even after sufficient rest?
 - have muscle aches and pains or muscle tension?
 - get easily fatigued?



than everyday anxiety, patients and physicians largely confuse its signs with those of other disorders, so the overwhelming majority of people with GAD go undiagnosed and undetected. This disorder urgently calls for greater public awareness and a concerned action by researchers and clinicians to improve the quality of care for patients and provide them with the highly effective treatments available today."

People with GAD do not simply worry excessively. Unlike normal, transient anxiety, the key characteristic of GAD is the patient's loss of control over worrying. This worry also typically persists for many months, even years, resulting in sleeplessness, irritability and poor concentration. The worry and anxiety associated with GAD are so intense, they may result in severe impairment in virtually all social roles, including personal relationships and the ability to work. GAD often worsens and exacerbates co-existing health conditions, leading to further disorders, disability and demoralization, as well as depression. In fact, GAD often is associated with chronic depression, other anxiety disorders and a wide range of medical conditions.

To help people with this condition, the GRAD Network was formed. Supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Wyeth-Ayerst Pharmaceuticals, its aim is to raise worldwide awareness of the risks and consequences of mood and anxiety disorders such as GAD and to enhance the diagnosis and treatment of GAD among primary care physicians and mental health specialists.

These experts say it would be wise to consult your doctor if you think you or someone you know suffers from GAD or any similar condition. For more information, visit the GRAD Network Web site at www.gradnetwork.com.