DIAGNOSIS OF GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

FLAME LECTURE: 46
VICKNAIR 3.3.20
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To describe the diagnostic criteria for anxiety
- To identify differential diagnosis of anxiety

Prerequisites:
- NONE

See also – for closely related topics
- FLAME LECTURE 44: Depression
GAD EPIDEMIOLOGY

- Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is the most common anxiety disorder in primary care and a common mental disorder diagnosed in the U.S.

- Prevalence:
  - 1 in 4 children (age 13-18) will experience anxiety
  - 12-month prevalence in U.S. adults (age 18-64) is 2.9%
  - Lifetime prevalence is 7.7% for females & 4.6% for men
  - GAD prevalence decreases with age in men, but increases with age in women

GAD DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

- Excessive anxiety or persistent worry for ≥ 6 months with difficulty to reduce worry and the symptoms are causing significant impairment or distress

- Experience ≥ 3 symptoms occurring > 50% of days
  (> 1 symptom for children)
  - Restlessness
  - Easily fatigued
  - Poor concentration or forgetful
  - Irritability
  - Tension-muscular
  - Sleep disturbance

GAD DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA

Mnemonic: WATCHERS

- Worry
- Anxiety
- Tension in muscles
- Concentration difficulty
- Hyperarousal or irritability
- Energy loss/fatigue
- Restlessness
- Sleep disturbance

The GAD-7 is used to detect GAD, but it can be used to screen for other disorders as well.

Using a threshold score of 10, the GAD-7:
- Has a Sensitivity 89% & Specificity 82% for GAD
- Has a Sensitivity 74% & Specificity 81% for Panic Disorder
- Has a Sensitivity 72% & Specificity 80% for Social Anxiety Disorder
- Has a Sensitivity 66% & Specificity 81% for PTSD

SCREENING - GAD-7

Scoring: 5 = Mild, 10 = Moderate, ≥15 = Severe Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over the past two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Several days</th>
<th>More than one half of the days</th>
<th>Nearly every day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being able to stop or control worrying</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total GAD-2 score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worrying too much about different things</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having trouble relaxing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being so restless that it is hard to sit still</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming easily annoyed or irritable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total GAD-7 score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**
A positive GAD-2 result is a score of at least 3 points; a positive GAD-7 result is a score of 8 or 9 points. The authors of the validation study recommend a cutoff of 8 or more points for an abnormal GAD-7 screen; however, a cutoff of 9 points has a higher LR+ compared with a cutoff of 8 points and a similar LR-.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score (points)</th>
<th>LR+</th>
<th>LR-</th>
<th>PPV (%)*</th>
<th>NPV (%)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GAD-2 ≥ 3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD-7 ≥ 9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD-2 ≥ 3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD-7 ≥ 9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LR+ = positive likelihood ratio; LR- = negative likelihood ratio; PPV = positive predictive value; NPV = negative predictive value.

* Assumes pretest probability of 20 percent.
DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

- Depressive Disorder
- Illness Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Separation Anxiety Disorder
- Phobia
- Trauma & Stressor related Disorder
- Adjustment Disorder
- Substance/Medication Induced
- Cardiovascular Disorders
- Endocrine Disorders
- Metabolic Disorders
- Respiratory Disorders
- Neurological Disorders
- Gastrointestinal Disorders
REFERENCES / IMPORTANT LINKS


4. Anxiety & Depression Association of America: https://adaa.org