

EDITORIAL

Cairo Symposium on Psychopathology of Anxiety and its Management

The symposium on psychopathology of anxiety and its management was held in Cairo from January 11 - 13, 1981. It was sponsored by the Egyptian Psychiatric Association under the patronage of President Sadat. Twenty two countries were represented with forty papers delivered and about 300 participants. The first session dealt with epidemiological and biological aspects of anxiety. The use of simple electrophysiological biofeed - back instruments was suggested as clinical response monitors in anxiety and the study of the electro acoustic analysis of voice tremor, voice speed in depression and EEG evoked responses was mentioned. Another paper hypothesised that anxiety is the most fundamental emotional state associated with physiological over-arousal. Thus, if such a state is induced without cognitive or intellectual clues about the source of the over arousal, the emotion which will be perceived is that of anxiety. Evidence supporting this view was presented from physiological and pharmacological experiments and observations.

The first attempt to study the sociodemographic aspects of anxiety disorders in Egypt and to apply the Arabic version of the PSE in evaluating the profiles of clusters and symptoms of anxiety in a 120 sample of patients. The details of this paper are given in this volume. Suggestions regarding the therapeutic strategies in anxiety states of different aetiologies, namely psychotherapy, drug therapy (MAOI, tricyclics, minor & major tranquilizers, Beta blockers), modified insulin and biofeedback therapy. Interesting papers were given on patterns of anxiety in criminal psychiatric patients and changes in self image after mastectomy. On the psychodynamics and differential diagnosis of anxiety and depression, the speaker tried to find the

main differences of those two types of patients in their personalities, psychodynamics and psychometric studies and to examine their inter-relationships. There was a plea for a new approach and language for the ambiguity of the concept of anxiety and its impact on therapy. Psychotic anxiety was discussed on the basis of the five basic dimensions of ego - consciousness; ego vitality, activity, consistency, demarcation and identity. The realization of the disturbance of the ego consciousness in its basic dimensions gives insight in the care of psychotic anxiety. The construct leads to some additional therapeutic approaches to the schizophrenic patient by producing a body oriented treatment program. Another hypothesis attempted to prove that there are two kinds of anxiety in paranoid psychosis, one related to paranoid experiences and secondary to them and another related to affective troubles underlying the paranoid productions.

The next session was on the pharmacotherapy and psychopathology of anxiety. Papers dealing with some characteristics of anxiety in atypical psychosis, the paradoxical parallelism of success and the clinical implications of pharmacokinetics of benzodiazepines. The clinician should know the elimination half - life of the benzodiazepines, e. g. for inducing sleep, rapid absorption, a relatively short half - life and absence of an active metabolite, for chronic severe persisting anxiety, compounds with a long half - life or active metabolites may be preferable, for situational anxiety and episodes of anxiety, compounds with a relatively short half - life and with no active metabolites are the best, while for elderly patients who have decreased rates of metabolic transformation, therefore drugs with a shorter half - life and without active metabolites are preferable.

It was found that beta - blockers are more successful in anxious states with somatic symptoms while anxiety with rare somatic symptoms show better results with tranquilizers. Others attempted to classify anxious - depression syndrome into (a) Anxious (b) Area of overlap (c) Depressed type, and the different approaches in management.

Various Egyptian studies were presented namely, phobic states in the Egyptian culture with emphasis on death, insanity and cancer phobias, father loss is more related to adult anxiety state, psycho - cutaneous conditions, mood shifts in anxiety during the menstrual

cycle, anxiety in hysteria, traumatic war neurosis, group therapy and the changing pattern of anxiety . . . etc.

Other papers were delivered on data suggesting that manifest anxiety may be less common among persons with a diagnosis of antisocial personality;.

The discovery of high affinity binding rates for benzodiazepines in the brain has enlightened the knowledge of their mode of action. It is likely that the population of benzodiazepine receptors is heterogeneous and that different receptors may be linked to the different clinical properties of benzodiazepines. The mapping of these receptors in the brain of numerous species, including man, is now well known. The close relationship of benzodiazepine receptors to receptors mediating GABA transmission allows a better understanding of the anticonvulsant activity of benzodiazepines. There is no doubt that the identification of the physiological substance acting at the level of benzodiazepine receptors will modify deeply our concepts and therapy of anxiety.

Studies on the elderly suggested that anxiety is an important component of depressive pseudo - dementia. This was not associated with any structural brain disorders, and in fact the presence of anxiety was negatively correlated with measures of ventricular size as proved by CAT studies. Ten years experience in a psychiatric pain and headache clinic was presented under the title of pain as thanatophobic psychosomatic disturbances. It was stimulating to bear the view that whether the management of anxiety is a therapeutic treatment or scientific research ? with some meta - scientific considerations.

The symposium was attended by the President & Secretary of WPA, the President and Secretary of EPA, Chairman & Secretary of the psychopathology committee of WPA and almost all its members with distinguished colleagues from all over the world.

The proceedings of the symposium will be published and will be available shortly.

AHMED OKASHA

