Anxiety & Obsessive Behaviors in people with I/DD

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Overview

- Definitions
  - Anxiety
  - Obsession
  - Behavior
- Prevalence of anxiety disorders
- Effective analysis of anxiety
- Treatment options
Definitions

- **ANXIETY**
  - Increased worry & concern
  - Perceived lack of safety
  - Autonomic arousal

- **OBSESSION**
  - Repetitive thoughts
  - Ego-dystonic; unwanted
  - Not enhancing function

- **BEHAVIOR**
  - Observable actions that an animal/person makes
Prevalence

- Most common disorder
- Reports from 17-95% of individuals with I/DD
- Rate increased with history of untreated, unrecognized trauma

Spectrum

- Normal ↔ Psychopathological
  - Generalized Anxiety; phobias; panic disorder
  - PTSD
  - OCD
  - Specific habits: trichotillomania, pica…
Detecting Anxiety

- Is there something new (or scary) going on?
- Does the person show physiologic signs and symptoms?
  - What is their state of arousal?
- Evidenced in what is spoken about and what is specifically not said.
- Excess worry may preoccupy all attention.
  - Not everyone shares the same worries.
Perceiving obsessive behavior

- Decoding compulsions
  - Number of repetitions; feel right
- Repetition reflecting mental cues
  - Preoccupied
  - +/- vocalizations
  - Mannerisms
  - Behavior may not be fixed; can be interrupted
- Increase with increasing stress or emotional pressure
- May not respond to reassurance
Therapeutic Strategies

- Reassurance
  - Listen; take concerns for real
- Environmental change
  - Assure safety; verify threat
  - Engage in participation
- Medications
  - SSRI, SNRI, TCA
  - BZD, alpha-blocker, beta-blocker
  - AED, mood stabilizer, antipsychotic…
- Psychotherapy
Therapeutic Strategies

• Relaxation
  • Direct touch: massage, hot-tub
  • Self-directed: auto-hypnosis, meditation

• Exercise
  • Movement:
    • Increase aerobic expenditure
    • Kinesthetic feedback
  • Outdoor activity; solo or group

• Sleep restoration
  • Improve sleep quality, duration
  • Assure regular hours (circadian rhythm)
Case discussions...

- A woman like her mother
  - IMI
- A man who wouldn’t go out
  - Luvox
- ...