

## **CC8 Unit- 2**

# **GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER**

Anxiety can be conceptualised as the normal and adaptive response to threat that prepares the organism for fight or flight. Generalised anxiety disorder can be defined as excessive worry and anxiety about a number of events or situations for most days during a six-month period. This worry or anxiety is associated with a number of physical symptoms and is uncontrollable. The anxiety being concerned about a number of events is often termed as “free-floating anxiety”.

The one year prevalence of generalised anxiety disorder in the general population is about 2.5-8%. It is the commonest psychiatric disorder in the population. As anxiety is a cardinal feature of almost all psychiatric disorders, it is very important to exclude other diagnoses. The most important differential diagnosis is from depressive disorders.

## **Diagnostic Criteria According to DSM V :-**

- a. Excessive worry and anxiety occurring for most days during a six months period over a number of events or situations such as work or school performance.
- b. The person finds it difficult to control.
- c. The excessive worry and anxiety are associated with at least three of the following six symptoms for most days during the six months period-
  1. Restlessness, feeling “keyed up” or “on edge”.
  2. Being easily fatigued.
  3. Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank.
  4. Irritability.
  5. Muscle tension.

- 6. Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, restlessness or unsatisfying sleep).
- d. The anxiety and worry causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, interpersonal or other major areas of functioning.
- e. This disturbance is not attributable to physiological effects of a substance (such as drug abuse or medication) or another medical condition (such as hypothyroidism).
- f. This disturbance is not better explained by another mental condition like panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, body dysmorphic disorder , illness anxiety disorder, schizophrenia or delusional disorder.

## **Clinical Features:-**

1. Worry and apprehension- The worry experienced by patients with GAD are free floating and more prolonged. The person feels that the worries difficult to control.
2. Psychological arousal- The worry and apprehensive stage triggers a psychological arousal. That is evident in irritability, poor concentration, unsustained attention and poor memory.
3. Autonomic over activity- This includes palpitation, sweating, dry mouth, shortness of breath, dizziness.
4. Muscle Tension- GAD patients may report of restlessness, trembling, inability to relax, headache (frontal and occipital usually), back and shoulder ache.
5. Sleep Disturbances- This includes difficulty in falling or staying asleep. The sleep is often intermittent, unrefreshing and unpleasant dreams.