Abstract

Anxiety and adverse health outcomes among cardiac patients: a biobehavioral model.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

Anxiety is a common experience among patients with acute coronary syndrome (ACS) that can have a negative impact on health outcomes. Nonetheless, the negative role of anxiety remains underappreciated, as reflected by clinicians’ underrecognition and undertreatment of anxious hospitalized and nonhospitalized patients with ACS. Underappreciation of the role of anxiety is possibly related to inadequate understanding of the mechanisms whereby anxiety may adversely affect health outcomes.

PURPOSE:

The aim of this study was to synthesize the evidence about potential mechanisms by which anxiety and adverse health outcomes are related.

CONCLUSIONS:

A biobehavioral model links anxiety to the development of thrombogenic and arrhythmic events in patients with ACS. Biologically, anxiety may interfere with the immune system, lipid profile, automatic nervous system balance, and the coagulation cascade, whereas behaviorally, anxiety may adversely affect adoption of healthy habits and cardiac risk-reducing behaviors. The biological and behavioral pathways complement each other in the production of poor outcomes.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Anxiety requires more attention from clinical cardiology. The adverse impact of anxiety on health outcomes could be avoided by efficient assessment and treatment of anxiety.

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