

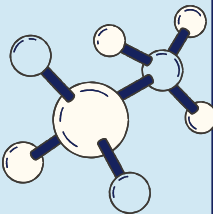
Chapter 6: Mental, Behavioural or Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (ICD-11: 6B00)



01. Introduction

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a common mental health condition characterised by excessive and persistent worry that can affect everyday life, including relationships, work and education. Over time, treatment and provision of care have changed alongside advances in research and changing attitudes towards mental health. These developments have also been influenced by social, cultural and political factors (World Health Organization, 2024; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2020).



02. Historical Treatment and Provision of Care

- Anxiety was not always recognised as a mental health condition.
- Many people believed it was caused by weakness or poor self-control.
- Common treatments included rest, living in asylums, and sedative medication to reduce symptoms.
- As research improved, healthcare professionals gained a better understanding of anxiety, leading to more effective treatments and person-centred care (Scull, 2015; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2020).

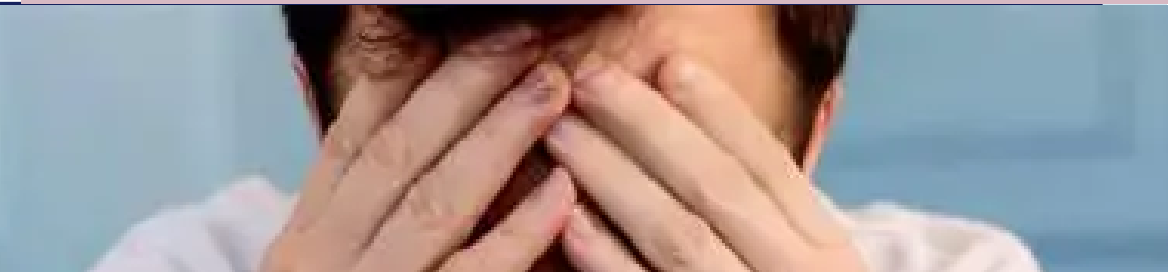


03. Contemporary Treatment and Provision of Care

- Care has moved away from institutional treatment towards community-based and person-centred support.
- A range of treatments is available, including psychological therapies, medication, self-help strategies and lifestyle support, depending on the person's needs.
- Early assessment and timely intervention can improve recovery and reduce the long-term impact of anxiety.
- Although treatment has improved, long waiting times, unequal access to services and limited resources can still prevent people from receiving timely care (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2020; World Health Organization, 2024).

04. Social, Cultural and Political Context

- Social attitudes towards mental health have improved, but many people still feel embarrassed or afraid to seek help.
- Cultural beliefs can influence how anxiety is understood, recognised and treated.
- Government policies, funding and access to NHS mental health services affect the quality and availability of care.
- Differences in income, ethnicity and location can create unequal access to mental health support (Department of Health and Social Care, 2023; World Health Organization, 2024).



05. Stigma, Discrimination and Inequality

- People with GAD may avoid seeking help because they fear being judged or misunderstood.
- Stigma can lead to discrimination in employment, education and healthcare, affecting quality of life.
- Ethnic minority groups and people from disadvantaged backgrounds often experience greater barriers to accessing mental health services.
- Reducing stigma and improving equal access to care are essential for achieving better mental health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2022; Mental Health Foundation, 2024).

06. Critical Analysis

Despite significant advances in the treatment and provision of care for Generalised Anxiety Disorder, current approaches remain open to criticism. Although NICE (2020) recommends evidence-based interventions, these are not consistently available in practice because of workforce shortages, limited funding and increasing demand for mental health services. This creates a disconnect between policy and the care that many individuals actually receive. Furthermore, current treatment often prioritises symptom management through therapy and medication, while giving less attention to wider social determinants, such as poverty, unemployment and social isolation, which can contribute to the development and persistence of anxiety. As a result, improvements in clinical practice have not eliminated inequalities in mental healthcare, raising questions about whether existing services are sufficiently equipped to provide equitable and long-term support (NICE, 2020; World Health Organization, 2024).

07. Recommendations

- Increase investment in NHS mental health services to reduce waiting times and improve access to treatment (NICE, 2020).
- Expand early intervention programmes to ensure people receive support before symptoms become more severe.
- Provide ongoing training for healthcare professionals to improve the recognition and management of anxiety disorders.
- Develop policies that address the wider causes of anxiety, including poverty, unemployment and social isolation, alongside clinical treatment (World Health Organization, 2024).
- Strengthen public education campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage earlier help-seeking

References

- American Psychiatric Association (2022) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 5th edn, text revision. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Bandelow, B. and Michaelis, S. (2022) 'Epidemiology of anxiety disorders in the 21st century', Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience, 24(1), pp. 1–10.
- Cuijpers, P., Cristea, I.A., Karyotaki, E., Reijnders, M. and Huibers, M.J.H. (2016) 'How effective are cognitive behaviour therapies for major depression and anxiety disorders?', World Psychiatry, 15(3), pp. 245–258.
- Department of Health and Social Care (2023) Major conditions strategy: Case for change and our strategic framework. London: DHSC.
- Mental Health Foundation (2024) Mental Health Statistics: Anxiety Available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2020) Generalised anxiety disorder and panic disorder in adults: Management (CG113) Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113>
- Scull, A. (2015) Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Stein, D.J. and Sareen, J. (2015) 'Generalised Anxiety Disorder', New England Journal of Medicine, 373(21), pp. 2059–2068.
- World Health Organization (2022) World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- World Health Organization (2024) International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision (ICD-11) for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics Available at: <https://icd.who.int>