

## Q & A Mindline



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**Q I recently visited a psychiatrist who diagnosed me with Generalised Anxiety Disorder or GAD for which he prescribed antidepressants and tranquilisers. He also gave me some lifestyle modification advice. However, I still don't feel better! Please suggest a quick cure for my problem.**

It is not uncommon to become impatient and seek rapid resolution of experienced feelings and symptoms. But then, this impatience will prolong the suffering rather than resolve it. I think this is a typical presentation in India, wherein individuals suffer from anxiety and depression for weeks and months before seeking professional help or finding a cure to their problems.

It is essential that you take time to gain a deeper understanding of why you are experiencing a said difficulty or emotion. In times of distress, this may be difficult, but it is all the more important to speak to someone who has the skill or expertise to listen and formulate your experiences within a circumstance or context.

Antidepressants have prominent anxiolytic properties, but they take time (4-6 weeks from initiation) to become

fully effective. Be patient and allow for the medicine to take effect. Until then rest, relax and rejuvenate. Keep active and take on aerobic activity. Talk through your experiences and associated context and make amends, as required. Meditation will reduce the hovering thoughts and help bring your mind into the present moment.

**Q I have been advised CBT for depression. I wanted to know if it will help with my depressive illness which has gone on for five years and recurred several times, despite taking medicines. Please advise.**

CBT or Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is a form of psychotherapy or talking therapy that can be used to treat a wide array of mental health and psychological problems. CBT is proven to be effective in treatment of anxiety and depression besides other common psychiatric disorders including addictive disorders.

CBT is based on the idea that our thinking (cognition), feelings (emotion) and action (behaviour) are all interlinked. The treatment goals of cognitive behavioural therapy are to help an individual become aware of distorted thinking patterns, negative interpretations and behaviour which reinforce the distorted thinking. It also helps an individual to develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving, to reduce psychological distress.

I hope your psychiatrist has explored other emerging stressors and interpersonal factors contributing to your recurrence of illness besides optimising the dose of medicine. Research data suggests that CBT along with medication is more efficient than either treatment alone. I would, therefore recommend acting on the recommendation of CBT at the earliest opportunity.

**Q How do you define substance abuse and how likely is it for a GP (general physician) to come across such a patient in his/her practice?**

Differentiating substance abuse from dependency syndrome or addiction is important. Substance abuse, also known as 'drug abuse' typically refers to the consumption of psychoactive materials such as illicit drugs or alcohol that is regular and excessive and which begins to cause harm to proper functioning, health, work, social life and to others.

Use of psychoactive material can cause dependence syndrome - which is a cluster of cognitive, behavioural and physiological phenomena that progresses after frequent use of substance. Features of dependency typically include Four C's: Compulsive manner of drug seeking and taking, Craving for the substance, struggling in Controlling its usage (amount and frequency) and Continuation of its consumption, even with dangerous outcomes. An individual tends to prioritise it over other obligations and activities. Besides, there can be increased tolerance (need to increase the quantity of drug to achieve the same effect) and physical withdrawal state (example: tremors, restlessness or insomnia).

As General Physicians are our essential frontline service providers, it is highly likely that they will see those who abuse illicit substances or prescribed tranquilliser that is not consistent with legal or medical guidelines. It is equally important that the General Physicians seek expert support in the management of those abusing substance or suspected of having become dependent.

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