



# The Role of Hospital Anxiety in the Development of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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## DESCRIPTION

The experience of hospitalization can be a challenging and distressing time for individuals and the role of hospital anxiety in the development of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a significant aspect of mental health research. Hospitalization, whether for a medical procedure, surgery, or a critical illness, can trigger anxiety due to various factors, including uncertainty, medical procedures, and the unfamiliar environment. Understanding how hospital anxiety contributes to the development of PTSD is essential for clinicians, healthcare providers, and researchers in addressing the mental health needs of individuals undergoing medical treatments.

Hospital anxiety can manifest in various forms, including preoperative anxiety, procedure-related anxiety, and general anxiety associated with the hospital environment. Preoperative anxiety, for example, arises before surgery and is often linked to concerns about the procedure itself, potential complications, or the outcome. Procedure-related anxiety may occur during medical interventions, diagnostic tests, or any medical procedure, leading to heightened stress and apprehension. General hospital anxiety encompasses overall discomfort, fear, or unease related to the hospital setting, which can be exacerbated by factors such as noise, unfamiliar routines, or lack of control.

The relationship between hospital anxiety and the development of PTSD is multifaceted. Individuals experiencing high levels of anxiety during hospitalization may be more vulnerable to developing PTSD symptoms, particularly if the hospitalization involves traumatic events or life-threatening situations. Traumatic medical experiences, such as a severe illness, medical complications, or emergency interventions, can contribute to the development of PTSD.

The perception of a life-threatening event, whether real or perceived, can trigger the body's stress response, leading to the release of stress hormones such as cortisol. In situations where individuals feel a loss of control, experience intense fear, or face mortality, the physiological and psychological impact can contribute to the development of PTSD. The memory of the hospitalization, including sensory details and emotional

responses, may become ingrained, leading to intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and hyperarousal key features of PTSD.

The presence of hospital anxiety can also influence how individuals process and cope with the traumatic experience. Those with high levels of anxiety may be more prone to maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as avoidance of reminders or discussions related to the hospitalization. Avoidance behaviors can contribute to the persistence of PTSD symptoms by preventing the natural processing and integration of the traumatic experience.

Furthermore, hospital anxiety can impact the individual's perception of the medical professionals and the healthcare environment. A negative hospital experience, perceived lack of support, or inadequate communication with healthcare providers may contribute to the development of PTSD. Conversely, positive interactions, effective communication, and a supportive healthcare environment can act as protective factors, potentially reducing the risk of PTSD development.

Identification and early intervention for hospital anxiety are important in preventing the progression to PTSD. Healthcare providers can implement strategies to assess and address anxiety during hospitalization, including preoperative counseling, relaxation techniques, and psychosocial support. Additionally, fostering a patient-centered and trauma-informed approach to care can contribute to a more supportive and empathetic healthcare environment.

Research has explored the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing hospital anxiety and preventing PTSD. Techniques such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based interventions, and pharmacological approaches have shown promise in mitigating anxiety and trauma-related symptoms. Integrating mental health support into the standard care protocols for individuals undergoing hospitalization can contribute to a more comprehensive and comprehensive approach to patient well-being.

In conclusion, the role of hospital anxiety in the development of PTSD underscores the intricate relationship between medical

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experiences and mental health outcomes. Hospitalization, especially in the context of traumatic events or life-threatening situations, can contribute to heightened anxiety, potentially increasing the risk of PTSD. Recognizing the impact of hospital anxiety on mental health and implementing proactive measures to address anxiety during hospitalization are essential steps in

promoting the overall well-being of individuals undergoing medical treatments. By promoting a trauma-informed and supportive healthcare environment, healthcare providers can contribute to minimizing the risk of PTSD and facilitating the recovery and resilience of patients.