Hypochondriasis (Illness Anxiety Disorder) is excessive worrying about your health, to the point where it causes great distress and affects your everyday life. Some people with health anxiety have a medical condition, which they worry about excessively. Others have medically unexplained symptoms, such as chest pain or headaches, which they are concerned may be a sign of a serious illness, despite the doctor’s reassurance. They usually misinterpret their sensations or minor symptoms to fit with their feared illness. Others may be permanently anxious about their future health, worrying about things like: “What if I get cancer or heart disease?”

Introduction

Hypochondriasis (Illness Anxiety Disorder) is a subtype of IAD that is found in the Australian population. A study of the Australian population found 37.50% worrying about things like:

- Fire to the flame.
- For some sort of disease only adds worry to the flame.
- The calendar is an awareness day for some sort of disease only adds worry to the flame.
- Constantly seeking information by raising awareness to diseases.

The Internet

The Web has inflated all of our worst hypochondriac tendencies by making data on far-fetched syndromes readily available. In reality, most of this information is wrong and only increase your health concerns.


does Illness Anxiety Come in Different Types?

- **Constantly Seeking Information and Reassurance**
  - For example, obsessively researching illnesses from the internet, booking frequent GP appointments, and having frequent tests that don’t find any problems.

- **Avoidant Behaviour**
  - Avoiding medical TV programmes, GP appointments and anything else that might trigger the anxiety, and avoiding activities such as exercise that are perceived to make the condition worse.

What Are The Causes of Illness Anxiety Disorder?

- You may be going through a particularly stressful period of your life.
- There may have been illness or death in your family.
- Another family member may have worried a lot about your health when you were young.

Personality

You may be vulnerable to health anxiety because you are a worrier generally. You may find it difficult to handle emotions and conflict, and tend to "catastrophize" when faced with problems in your life.

The Prevalence of IAD

A study of the Australian population found that illness anxiety is experienced by approximately 1 in 20 over their lifetime. In 1st year the prevalence was very low, this is due to them not being well oriented with any major diseases. In 2nd year it starts rising and reaches its peak in 3rd year; this is due to them being well-oriented with diseases but still not knowing their clinical correlation. Due to the high prevalence in 3rd year, MSS is also usually known as "Third-Year Syndrome". In the clinical years, students start seeing real patients with diseases and start realizing how unlikely it is for them to contract them, so the prevalence decreases. The prevalence of MSS in LIMU is relatively high in comparison to the prevalence in King Saud University in Saudi Arabia which was only 3.8%.

Why is The Prevalence of IAD Rising?

- **Media Overload:**
  - Health campaigns & TV programmes have increased IAD by raising awareness to diseases. The fact that nearly every day on the calendar is an awareness day for some sort of disease only adds fire to the flame.

- **The Internet (Cyberchondria):**
  - The Web has inflated all of our worst hypochondriac tendencies by making data on far-fetched syndromes readily available. In reality, most of this information is wrong and only increase your health concerns.

Conclusion

- Illness Anxiety Disorder (previously known as Hypochondria) has been rising dramatically during the past few years due to the general population having easy access to medical information.
- Medical Student Syndrome is real and is a subtype of IAD that is found in medical students. It’s prevalence among the students of Libyan International Medical University is relatively high.

References