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Anxiety Disorders with Mixed Manic Features (subsyndromal hypomania): Extending the Bipolar Spectrum

Introduction: DSM-V introduced the mixed feature specifier for major depression co-occurring with comorbid subsyndromal hypomania, thereby denoting a form of MDD with higher suicidality, substance abuse and treatment-resistance. We hypothesized that a proportion of treatment-resistant anxiety disorders would also exhibit "mixity" in the form of subsyndromal hypomania, and would exhibit excess rates of substance use disorder.

Methods: 335 open charts of non-psychotic outpatients seen between 1994-2016, either at an outpatient faculty clinic or Downstate outpatient services, were retroactively reviewed using DSM-5 criteria for mixed manic features (subsyndromal mania). A subset of 50 subjects with anxiety disorder with mixed manic features were examined for treatment response and cluster analysis characteristics.

Results: Prevalence of depression with mixed features and our putative diagnosis of anxiety disorder with mixed manic features were 27.2% (n = 91) and 29.6% (n = 99), respectively. Mixed features were evident in 78% (91/116) of MDD only patients and 67% (99/147) of patients with a primary anxiety disorder, indicating significant mixity in the sample [p = 0.045]. Patients presenting with anxiety disorders with mixed features had significantly increased rates of severe substance abuse (25.3%) in comparison to patients with anxiety disorders without mixity (8.3%) [p=.009]. Of a subset of patients (n = 50) presenting with anxiety disorder with mixed features, 80% (n = 40) were resistant to standard antidepressants.

Conclusions: We articulate a novel anxiety disorder construct – anxiety disorder with mixed manic features – present in about two thirds of patients with primary anxiety disorders in our sample our two University related outpatient clinics. The entity, similar to MDD with mixed features, is associated with treatment-resistance and excess rates of substance use disorder. Prospective studies are warranted to validate this diagnostic entity.

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