

EPV0144

Excessive preoccupation of having a serious illness in medicine residents

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Introduction: Excessive preoccupation of having a serious illness (EPHSI) or illness anxiety disorder is frequently reported by doctors and medical students

Objectives: Our objectives were to estimate the frequency of EPHSI in a population of medicine residents in Tunisia and to determine the factors associated with this pathology.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study via internet, carried out among 404 medicine residents practicing in Tunisia during the period of November and December 2020 and January 2021.

The information was collected using a pre-designed questionnaire, edited using the Google site and disseminated via social networks. This questionnaire was inspired by the Health Anxiety Questionnaire, the MSD score, and the DSM-5 criteria for illness anxiety disorder

Results: In the end of the study period, 404 medicine residents responded to the questionnaire. The mean age was 27.4 years, the sex ratio was 0.47. Residents who fulfilled the DSM5 criteria of anxiety illness disorder represented 33.7% of the total group.

The most preoccupying diseases were neoplastic diseases (40.8%), neurodegenerative disorders (14.3%), and psychiatric disorders (10%).

EPHSI was associated to several sociodemographic, anamnestic and psychological factors

Conclusions: The establishment of psychological support systems for students, emphasizing coping and stress management techniques, should be implemented to prevent the EPHSI.

Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

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Anxiety and its effect on foreign medical students

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Introduction: Nowadays thousands of students choose to get into medical universities in foreign countries for a plethora of reasons. Tunisia represents one of these destinations, thanks to its geographic localization, weather, biological diversity as well as its ethnical and cultural background.

Objectives: To determine the effect of anxiety and psychological distress on the motivation of studies in foreign students in Tunisia.

Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional, descriptive and analytical study, carried out between July and September 2023 among foreign students at the Sfax Faculty of Medicine. Data collection was carried out using an anonymous self-questionnaire via "Google Forms shared via social media. Psychological distress was assessed

using the "DASS-21" Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale. Motivation was assessed using the French version of the "SMMS-R-FR" Study Motivational Strength Questionnaire.

Results: Seventy-two foreign medical students completed the survey. The average age was 25 ± 3.45 years. The majority of students were male (57%). Coffee and tobacco were the most consumed substance by the students (88.9%, and 47.2% respectively). The mean score for score anxiety score was 6.59, 7.2 for depression and 7.83 for stress. The mean score for the strength of motivation was 42.4. We found a negative statistical association between the anxiety dimension and the strength of motivation ($p=0.011$, $r=-0.29$). We found no statistical association with the depressive symptoms dimension nor with the stress dimension. Smoking was correlated with anxiety and depression in our foreign students ($p=0.02$ and $p=0.027$ respectively).

Conclusions: Identifying psychological distress and screening for them can help prevent the deterioration of mental health of foreign students and therefore the deterioration their academic performance.

Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

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Examining the Relationship Between Cyberchondria and Health Anxiety in Clinical Medical Students

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Introduction: Cyberchondria refers to the phenomenon where individuals experience increased health anxiety due to excessive health-related information-seeking on the internet. This behavior can lead to increased worry, symptom misinterpretation, and the belief that one may be suffering from a serious illness. While internet health-seeking is common, it can become maladaptive and contribute to clinically significant anxiety.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence and severity of cyberchondria among medical students, and to explore the relationship between online health-seeking behaviors and health anxiety.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among clinical medical students using the **Cyberchondria Severity Scale (CSS)** and the **Short Health Anxiety Inventory (HAI-18)**. The CSS is a 12-item self-report questionnaire that assesses the frequency of online health searches, the distress caused by those searches, and the misinterpretation of symptoms. The HAI-18 evaluates the frequency and intensity of health-related worries and behaviors over the past six months. Participants were asked to report their online health-searching habits, emotional responses, and overall health anxiety levels.

Results: A total of 169 clinical students participated in the study, with a predominance of females (74%). The mean age of participants was 23 ± 1.5 years. Regarding family medical history, 62.1% of participants reported a familial history of medical conditions, while 26% had a familial history of psychiatric disorders. Additionally, 39.6% of participants reported that their family members had been hospitalized for a serious illness. A personal medical history was

reported by 23.7% of participants, and 21.3% had a documented history of psychiatric disorders. Health-related anxiety was observed in 21.9% of participants and was significantly associated with a history of family member hospitalization for a serious illness ($p < 0.05$). Regarding cyberchondria, 35.5% of participants reported low levels, 43.2% moderate levels, 20.1% high levels, and 1.2% very high levels. High levels of cyberchondria were significantly associated with higher health anxiety scores ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: The findings suggest a moderate to high prevalence of cyberchondria among clinical medical students, with a strong association between higher cyberchondria scores and increased health-related anxiety. Interventions to reduce cyberchondria should focus on managing health anxiety and mitigating the negative impact of online health information

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EPV0145

Suppressing Health-Related Thoughts: A Pathway to Increased Anxiety?

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Introduction: Health-related anxiety, characterized by excessive worry about one's health, often leads to significant distress and impairment. Thought suppression, the conscious attempt to control or avoid unwanted thoughts, is frequently associated with various psychological conditions, including anxiety disorders. Research suggests that individuals with anxiety may attempt to suppress thoughts related to their fears, potentially exacerbating symptoms.

Objectives: The present study investigates the relationship between thought suppression and health-related anxiety, exploring how the tendency to suppress intrusive thoughts may influence health anxiety levels.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey design was employed, with participants drawn from a sample of medical students. The White Bear Suppression Inventory (WBSI) was used to assess the extent to which participants tend to suppress intrusive thoughts, while the Health Anxiety Inventory (HAI-18) was used to measure health-related anxiety. The HAI-18 evaluates the frequency and intensity of health-related worries and behaviors over the past six months.

Results: The study recruited 213 medical students, of which 74.2% were female. The mean age of participants was 22.11 ± 2 years. Among the sample, 22.1% had a personal medical history, and 20.2% had a documented history of psychiatric disorders. Regarding family medical history, 59.6% of participants reported a familial history of medical conditions, and 21.6% reported a familial history of psychiatric disorders. Additionally, 39% of participants had family members who had been hospitalized for serious illness.

Health-related anxiety was observed in 26.3% of participants. A significant positive correlation was found between WBSI scores (thought suppression) and HAI scores (health-related anxiety) ($r = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that participants who reported higher levels of thought suppression were more likely to experience health-related intrusive thoughts and heightened anxiety about their health. Furthermore, individuals with higher health anxiety tended

to have a stronger inclination to suppress thoughts, compared to those with lower levels of health anxiety.

Conclusions: The findings indicate a positive relationship between thought suppression and health-related anxiety among medical students. Specifically, students who engage in higher levels of thought suppression tend to report more frequent intrusive thoughts related to health and greater anxiety about their well-being. Future research could explore interventions aimed at reducing thought suppression as a potential strategy for alleviating health anxiety.

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EPV0146

The Impact of Thought Suppression on Cyberchondria

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Introduction: Cyberchondria, defined as excessive and anxiety-driven health-related internet searching, has become an increasingly significant issue in the digital age, where easy access to online health information can contribute to heightened health anxiety. Recent studies suggest that cognitive avoidance strategies, such as thought suppression, may worsen anxiety-related behaviors, including health-related internet searching.

Objectives: The objective of this study was to investigate how the tendency to suppress thoughts (thought suppression) influences the development and intensity of cyberchondria in a sample of medical students.

Methods: A cross-sectional study design was employed, involving a sample of 213 medical students. The White Bear Suppression Inventory (WBSI) was used to assess participants' tendency to suppress health-related thoughts. The Cyberchondria Severity Scale (CSS) was used to measure the extent and severity of health-related internet searching behaviors. Participants also provided information about their medical history, family medical history, and psychiatric background.

Results: The sample consisted predominantly of females (74.2%), with a mean age of 22.11 ± 2 years. Among the 213 participants, 22.1% reported a personal medical history, and 20.2% had a documented history of psychiatric disorders. Regarding family medical history, 59.6% of participants reported a familial history of medical conditions, and 21.6% reported a familial history of psychiatric disorders. Additionally, 39% of participants reported that family members had been hospitalized for serious illness.

The levels of cyberchondria among participants were as follows: 36.6% of participants reported low levels of cyberchondria, 41.8% reported moderate levels, 20.7% reported high levels, and 0.9% reported very high levels of cyberchondria.

A significant positive correlation was found between WBSI scores (measuring thought suppression) and Cyberchondria Severity Scale (CSS) scores (measuring health-related internet searching) ($r = 0.4$, $p = 0.02$). This suggests that medical students who engaged in higher levels of thought suppression were more likely to experience intrusive health-related thoughts and engage in heightened online health searching behaviors.