

MJ Zvolensky et al Behavioural Research and Therapy. June (2001) Vol. 39 #6 p 683.

A study of anxiety sensitivity and its proposed association with fear of pain, as perceived in the chronic pain population.

Anxiety sensitivity is the fear of anxiety related symptoms. For example anxiety may induce feelings of nausea, anxiety sensitivity would measure a persons awareness/distaste of the effects of anxiety and its consequences.

68 chronic pain cases (consecutive referrals to pain clinic) were evaluated for anxiety sensitivity, depression and pain severity.

Assessment tools included:

- Anxiety Sensitivity Index
- Fear of Pain Questionnaire
- Pain Anxiety Symptoms Scale
- Beck Depression Inventory
- Multidimensional Pain Inventory



The results show that anxiety sensitivity predicts fear of pain and, anxiety about pain.

Depression as a predictor of pain severity was not nearly so closely associated.

Comment

Anxiety sensitivity may be a useful parameter to establish when assessing the need for rehabilitative care. However, the correlation between anxiety sensitivity and fear of pain and anxiety about may be an artifice, the three tools may coincidentally be measuring the same thing.

Whatever the truth of the above debate, it is clear that some people have real difficulties engaging with active rehabilitation. It is as well to determine who they are as early as possible, so that corrective action can be taken.
