

Physician Fact Sheet on Anxiety Disorders in Persons with Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD)

1. Anxiety is common in persons with all types of MR/DD.
2. Depression is a common cause of anxiety.
3. Specific types of anxiety disorders are common including phobias (4-8%), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD- 2-5%).
4. The clinical manifestations of anxiety depend on the severity of intellectual disability and the type of disorder.
5. Patients with mild MR/DD may describe or manifest classic anxiety symptoms.
6. Severely retarded persons may manifest anxiety through behavioral abnormalities including agitation, aggression, hostility, or self injurious behavior (SIB).
7. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's) are the drugs of choice in chronic anxiety.
8. Benzodiazepines can produce significant complications in the patient with MR/DD.
9. Buspirone may reduce symptoms of anxiety in all patient groups.
10. Psychological interventions are preferable in the treatment of anxiety for persons with mild MR/DD.