## Pamphlet for identifying anxiety and initial coping strategies

# PAMPHLET FOR IDENTIFYING ANXIETY AND INITIAL COPING STRATEGIES

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# PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- Anxiety is an issue that affects upwards of 33.7% of people in their lifetime.[1]
- The geriatric population is especially susceptible to anxiety due to a multitude of factors, including limitations in mobility, concerns with memory, increased burden of co-morbid conditions, and different clinical presentations.[2]
- There is strong evidence for a relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and worsening symptoms of anxiety in the general population, especially among the geriatric population.[3]
- Mental health literacy for anxiety is limited with less than half of individuals recognizing the diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder from a clinical vignette with older adults having the most difficulty.[4,5]

# PUBLIC HEALTH COSTS

- Anxiety cost the United States over 46.6 billion dollars in 1990, the most of any mental health disorder.[8]
- According to the Nuvance Health Community Health Needs 2022 Report[6]
  - *Rate of visits to hospitals for mental disorders are **3x** higher for older adults above of 75*
  - *Behavioral health conditions **can** be effectively managed in outpatient settings without intervention at hospitals, increasing the strain on the healthcare system.*
- Anxiety has a serious detrimental impact on quality of life when untreated. Anxiety results in poorer physical health, less social supports, smaller social circles, and impairments in occupational functioning.[7]

# COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

- Interviewed a social worker and a staff member from New Fairfield Senior Center.
- "Anxiety is a significant issue, especially in this population. What is unique about the elderly is that they are more isolated, and their social circles naturally shrink. They still need social stimulation, but they are not in the position to be making new friends."
- "There is anxiety about aging, about health care concerns. People become isolated with falls, which leads to anxiety about going out, which leads to deterioration in the body's condition, which causes more falls."
- "The older generation has significant anxiety about technology. People do not want to go to the portal for their health information."
- "The elderly population likely are less diagnosed with anxiety as they do not let anxiety stop them from doing what they need to do."

# INTERVENTION AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of my intervention is to inform patients of common signs and symptoms of anxiety to assist in patients recognizing anxiety and begin managing anxiety with potential at-home interventions.

An informational pamphlet was created that was geared towards informing patients about anxiety, potential symptoms, ways of managing anxiety at home, and resources for further treatment.

This pamphlet can be distributed at primary care centers or local communities such as cultural centers or senior centers for individuals to pick up.

## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is emotion characterized by feelings of **tension and worried thoughts**. It can have **physical symptoms** such as **sweating, restlessness, fast heartbeat, increased blood pressure, or tension**. It may feel like you are constantly in fear, constantly worrying, or constantly feeling overwhelmed. Anxiety can seriously impact your quality of life and cause or worsen other disorders such as depression.

Anxiety is a **common** disorder – up to a third of people may experience anxiety in their lifetimes. There is no exact cause for anxiety that can be identified. Anybody can experience anxiety and it can be about many different things such as anxiety about finance, family, health, or the future.

## Recognizing anxiety

Anxiety many times has to do with **future concerns** and can cause you to **avoid** situations to prevent symptoms from occurring. This can lead to difficulties with jobs, personal relationships, or daily life. Many times, anxiety can present as more physical symptoms than psychological symptoms.

Here are some common symptoms of anxiety.

- Restlessness, feeling on edge or keyed up
- Becoming easily fatigued
- Difficulties with concentration
- Irritability
- Muscle aches or tensions
- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches

## What can you do?

Anxiety is treatable condition! There are things you can do at home to help manage your anxiety as well. Here are some ways you can try to lower your anxiety at home.

- Support Groups: Local resources and communities such as senior centers, cultural centers, or churches can help with feeling connected.
- Exercise: Get adequate exercise such as going on walks or doing yoga.
- Reducing physical tension: Have regular leisure time and a hobby that makes you feel relaxed. Spend time outdoors and spend time in nature.
- Develop healthy habits: Make sure you are eating well balanced, regular meals. Make sure you are getting enough sleep and have a regular sleeping pattern.
- Analyze anxiety: Try to identify specific situations are events that are making anxious or stressed. Try and understand your response to anxiety and stress.
- Have a list of things you can do to help you feel less anxious on you to use when you need to.
- Breathing exercises: Pay attention to your breathing. Make sure you are not breathing too fast or too slow.

If anxiety is something that you are having significant struggles with, please reach out to a licensed mental health professional to speak further about your anxiety. They will be able to evaluate and manage what you are experiencing. The two primary ways to treat anxiety are psychotherapy and medications.

# PAMPHLET

# EVALUATION AND LIMITATIONS

- Effectiveness could be evaluated through surveys given to senior center members and patients if they choose to take a pamphlet.
- Survey questions could include a Likert scale grading topics such as:
  1. Did the pamphlet help you understand anxiety better?
  2. Did the pamphlet help you find resources in your community?
  3. Did the pamphlet help you manage your anxiety better?

## Limitations

- Inadequate intervention for properly managing anxiety as patients should still reach out to mental health care professionals for proper management of anxiety.
- It is still difficult to reach individuals that are isolated as the pamphlet would have to be distributed from a central location that individuals would have to go to.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- Pamphlet can be fine-tuned for specific communities to allow for more accurate resource consolidation for the community.
- Pamphlet should be translated into other language, especially Spanish and Portuguese for Danbury.
- Collect responses for survey to assess how effective this intervention was and if patients found the pamphlet useful.
- Continue to use pamphlets help inform patients of at home interventions and resources for managing anxiety.
- Potential for collaboration with organizations such as senior centers to host discussions about anxiety and the potential consequences.

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