



Effective Health Care

Anxiety Disorders in Children Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- The topic, *Anxiety Disorders in Children*, will go forward for refinement as a systematic review. The scope of this topic, including key questions, populations, interventions, comparators, and outcomes, will be further developed in the refinement phase.
- When key questions have been drafted, they will be posted on the AHRQ Web site and open for public comment. To sign up for notification when this and other Effective Health Care (EHC) Program topics are posted for public comment, please go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/join-the-email-list1/>.

Topic Description

Nominator(s): Individual

Nomination Summary: The nominator is interested in the comparative effectiveness of interventions (e.g., pharmacologic, psychosocial/behavioral, allied health, complementary) intended to treat anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. The nominator would like an inclusion of the following anxiety disorders: separation anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and panic disorder. The nominator is also interested in the comparative effectiveness of interventions with youth that have comorbidities including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression and somatic medical conditions. Further, the nominator requests an investigation of treatment effectiveness on youth of varying demographics (e.g., different ages, different patient histories, different socio-economic statuses [SES]). The nominator states that a synthesis of the literature can help to educate pediatric providers in recognizing and differentiating symptoms related to anxiety disorders in youth in order to inform treatment choices. Also, understanding modifiers of treatment and treatment pathways can help to optimize choices for patients and their families.

Staff-Generated PICOs

Population: Children and adolescents diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, including panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder. Subgroups of interest include youth with comorbidities (e.g., ADHD, depression, somatic medical conditions), youth within different age groups, and youth with varying histories (e.g., history of trauma, family history of anxiety disorder, parenting behavior/familial context)

Intervention: Approaches to treat anxiety disorder in children and adolescents, including pharmacologic, psychosocial/behavioral, and complementary approaches

Comparator(s): All treatment options

Outcome(s): Improvements in patient symptoms; improvements in family functioning; increased understanding of potential modifiers of treatment; increased understanding of optimal treatment pathway if first line approaches are not effective. Decreased medication side effects; decreased unintended consequences/harms associated with therapies; decreased family and child distress associated with diagnosis/labeling

**Key Questions
from Nominator:**

1. What is the comparative effectiveness of available interventions for children and adolescents with an anxiety disorder (including panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety disorder, specific phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder)?
2. What is the comparative effectiveness of interventions with youth who have comorbidities, including ADHD, depression and somatic medical conditions?
3. What is the comparative effectiveness of interventions with youth of varying demographics (e.g., ages, patient history, SES)?
4. What are modifiers of treatment and treatment pathways that can help to optimize choices for patients and families?

Considerations

- An estimated one in eight children is affected by anxiety disorders. If left untreated, anxiety disorders can cause significant impairment in children's and families' daily functioning, school performance, and quality of life. While there are effective options available for the treatment of children with anxiety disorders, including pharmacologic, psychosocial/behavioral (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy), and complementary approaches, certain treatment strategies can cause significant dysfunction and impairment in youth. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can minimize morbidity and mortality.
- A scan for existing resources on the topic found multiple systematic reviews. However, these reviews did not include all relevant comparisons. A literature scan identified over 350 trials potentially relevant to the topic. Therefore, a large body of recent literature exists. An updated synthesis of treatment options can help to inform clinical decision-making.