

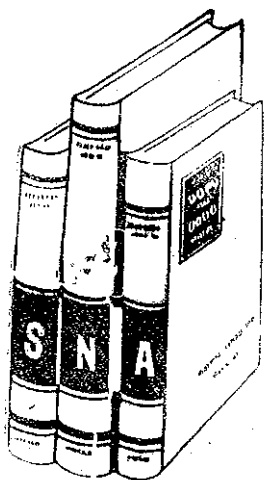
Anxiety in Illness-1

(An extract from a panel discussion conducted by the Students, College of Nursing, New Delhi, at the SNA Biennial Conference held in Vellore—October, 1967).

PARTICIPANTS

MISS CATHERINE MORAIS
MISS DYLLIS D'VAZ

MISS BIMLA MASIH
MISS VIJAY VERMA



Introduction

The subject of discussion is 'Anxiety in Illness'. This subject is of vital importance to the Nurse. The emphasis now is on total patient care. The nurse plays an important role in respect to the early recognition and alleviation of a patient's anxiety. An understanding of the sources of anxiety is therefore very essential.

Example : A patient admitted with acute appendicitis is admitted with fears, worries, anxieties and perhaps loneliness. This inter-relation of mind and body calls for a more comprehensive approach and it is increasingly being realised that fear, anxiety, worry, and insecurity may act as retarding factors in the patient's recovery.

What is Anxiety ?

Anxiety may said to be a reaction to danger and also an increased mental and perceptual alertness to threat. It is an unpleasant state, which we want to get rid off by some way or the other.

Anxiety is evoked when a person confronts a situation that threatens his self image. Every person needs to see himself as able to satisfy his wants, to communicate with others and to be able to meet goals and expectations he has set for himself and when he's unable to fulfil these needs, a feeling of anxiety dominates him. For example, a 56 years old Mr. Gupta with a cardiac involvement, had been placed in an O₂ tent to ease his dyspnoea. Shortly after he was placed in the tent he

became tense and started watching every movement of the nurse closely. Frequently he placed his hand near the opening where the oxygen was flowing into the tent. Finally he called the nurse and said, 'Will you be in here while this is running' ? She just told him not to bother : for it was her duty and she left the place. Here by not explaining the working of the apparatus, anxiety was aroused in Mr. Gupta and he became more agitated. He needed orientation to the oxygen apparatus and the lack of which produced considerable amount of anxiety and fear in the patient. This anxiety became evident by his quick speech, tense movements, questions and requests.

What are the elements that contribute to anxiety

Every illness involves some sort of change—a change not only in his total situation, but also in the physical and emotional environment. Any sickness being indicative of a disorder of health is disconcerting.

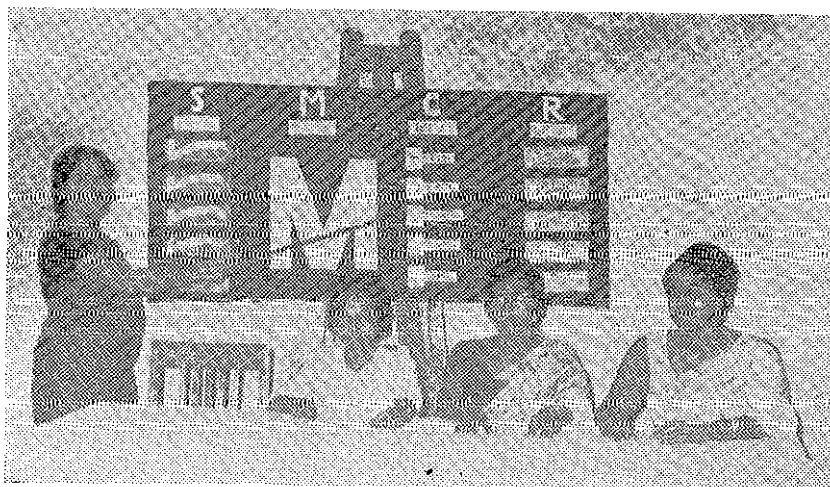
There is practically no one who is not disturbed by his plight when illness comes and some are more obviously distressed than others. But in all cases, illness requires a tremendous adjustment of individuals.

Anxiety may be evoked due to internal force i.e. it is often related to individuals past experiences too.

Many hospitalized patients experience anxiety because the combined effects of illness, and confinement induce in them one or more of the following emotions : *a sense of helplessness*—as the patient depends on the nurse to help him, *a sense of isolation*—because he is cut off from his friends and relations and perhaps from other patients, *a sense of insecurity*—because he does not know what will happen to him and what will be his future.

A patient is often subjected to diagnostic and treatment procedures

(Contd. on page 136)



Panel in Session