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PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERISTICS OF COPING IN A SAMPLE OF OUTPATIENT WITH ANXIETY DISORDERS

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Introduction: The ways of coping with problems and emotions are particularly important in anxiety disorders. It is also likely that subjective functional styles help identify the mode of presentation of these disorders, regardless of diagnosis psychopathology.

Objectives: Clinical and functional investigation of outpatients attending a third-level Anxiety Disorders Unit.

Aims: To identify the most employed coping strategies and investigate whether different coping styles are linked to specific expressions of psychopathology by means of a cross-correlation analysis between dimensional measures of coping and characteristics of psychopathology.

Methods: We administered a set of instruments including SCL-90-R and Brief-COPE to 172 patients; categorical diagnoses according to DSM-IV-TR were as follows: GAD 80 (46.5%), 33 PD (19.2%), other miscellaneous 59 (34.3%). The statistical analyses of correlation between COPE and SCL scores were performed by means of Spearman's Rho.

Results: The most represented (mean score >5) coping strategies include: active coping, planning, self-blame, instrumental support, emotional support, self-distraction, acceptance, venting. Venting, denial, behavioural disengagement, and use of emotional support, show positive correlations ($p \leq 0.04$) with anxiety, phobic anxiety and GSI; self-blame with anxiety and GSI. Conversely, humour correlates ($p \leq 0.04$) negatively with anxiety and GSI.

Conclusions: Correlations between high scores of GSI and specific coping strategies suggest possible mechanisms of interaction between functioning styles and expressions of psychopathology. The interpretation of these findings requires further investigation of interactive mechanisms, taking into account phases of activity or remission of the clinical syndrome.