

AP: *How could health professionals be more helpful?*

GM: Telling the patient that they have panic disorder is not enough. You need to describe the symptoms to the person. They will be greatly relieved that their symptoms are being recognised. Providing an information leaflet, which includes a list of typical symptoms, can also be helpful.

The person should be reassured that there is a very successful treatment, but it requires their co-operation. There is no magic pill. If the patient is referred, it is important that they are seen by someone skilled in cognitive behaviour therapy.

AP: *What would you advise people with similar symptoms to do?*

GM: Australians have a tendency to put themselves down. This can result in people with anxiety blaming themselves and not doing anything about it. If people cannot function

because of panic they need to go and see a specialist in anxiety disorders.

People have to be willing to work for themselves as part of cognitive behaviour therapy. Once they have learned the technique, people will realise that it works quickly and with practice they will be able to master their fears. They should not expect to jump straight to their goal. With cognitive behaviour therapy, the journey to that goal is just as important as the outcome. Making your own discoveries on the way is empowering.

People should be aware that if they have had panic disorder for 20 years it is likely to recur. If they keep practising how to challenge worrying thoughts they will retain control.

Cognitive behaviour therapy has given me a sense of being stronger because I am looking after myself without the need for drugs.

Patient support organisations

Panic and anxiety disorders associations/foundations

Community organisations in several states provide counselling, education and support to people living with panic and anxiety disorders. Services include telephone counselling, support groups, workshops, books and tapes, and a wide range of programs.

Contacts

A.C.T.

Anxiety Support Group
Tel: 0500 806 500

New South Wales

Mental Health Information Service
Tel: (02) 9816 5688; 1800 674 200
Web site: www.nswamh.org

Anxiety Disorders Foundation
Tel: (02) 9963 3494
Fax: (02) 9716 0416

Northern Territory

Anxiety Disorders Foundation
Tel: (08) 8927 9411

Queensland

Mental Health Association
Tel: (07) 3358 4988
Fax: (07) 3254 1027
E-mail: association@mentalhealth.org.au
Web site: www.mentalhealth.org.au

Panic Anxiety Disorders Association
Tel: (07) 3353 4851

South Australia

Panic Anxiety Disorders Association
PO Box 83 FULLARTON SA 5063
Tel: (08) 8373 2161
Fax: (08) 8373 2090
E-mail: mhrc@camtech.net.au (P.A.D.A.)

Victoria

Anxiety Disorders Association
Tel: (03) 9853 8089
E-mail: adavic@eisa.net.au
Web site: home.vicnet.net.au/~adavic/

Anxiety Recovery Centre
PO Box 358 MT WAVERLEY VIC 3149
Tel: (03) 9576 2477
Fax: (03) 9576 2499
E-mail: arcmail@arcvic.com.au

Panic Anxiety Disorders Association
Tel: (03) 9889 6760
Fax: (03) 9889 1022
E-mail: tranx@alphalink.com.au
Web site: www.tranx.org.au

Western Australia

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PO Box 130 NEDLANDS WA 6909
Tel: (08) 9380 9898
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