**Differential Diagnosis of Anxiety**

GAD must be differentiated from the following conditions:

* Anxiety as a result of an organic cause (hyperthyroidism, Cushing’s Syndrome temporal lobe epilepsy)
* Anxiety triggered by a specific situation
* Normal anxiety in response to stress

Because brief anxiety is a normal reaction common in specific situations, it is different than generalized, chronic anxiety. GAD must also be distinguished from other psychiatric disorders, medical conditions, and drug-related conditions.

Psychiatric conditions that may cause symptoms similar to GAD include the following:

* Major depressive disorder (depression)
* Other anxiety disorders
* Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
* Panic disorder
* Phobias
* Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Depression and anxiety often occur simultaneously, and each must be evaluated to make an appropriate treatment plan.

When the anxiety is focused on certain situations, as in OCD or PTSD, and when it is expressed as panic, it is diagnosed and treated as such.

Anxiety also is associated with drug and alcohol abuse.

It is a symptom of withdrawal from alcohol, benzodiazapines, cocaine, marijuana, and SSRIs.

Certain stimulants (e.g., amphetamines, asthma medication, caffeine) can produce anxiety.