

# The Importance of Psychotherapy with Asthmatic Patients

*By Gina Bianu*

## The Importance of Psychotherapy with Asthmatic Patients

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**ABSTRACT.** The relationship between asthma and psychological disorders that are triggered once a person finds out the diagnosis, as well as its collateral symptoms represent a harsh toll upon the quality of private, professional and social life of any patient. Asthmatic patients can develop psychological disorders like stress, anxiety depression that may disturb daily routine, like emotional and social interconnection. Taking into account the person as a whole, bearing in mind the bio-psycho-social model, his/her timely diagnosis of any potential psychological disorder, it is both recommended and extremely beneficial that psychological counseling and psychotherapy be used besides any kind of medication. An integrated plan that includes mainly pharmaceutical treatment and a non-pharmaceutical one can be clearly benefic for any patient, for the efficient management of the disorder, by learning the techniques and strategies which diminish the symptoms, for a better understanding the disorder's causes and for the countering of any emotional issue.

**Keywords:** asthma, stress, depression, anxiety, psychotherapy, comorbidity.

Asthma represents a chronic inflammatory condition that makes breathing difficult due to narrowing of the airways, triggering limitation in airflow that leads to recurrent and fluctuating symptoms like coughing, whistling sound (wheezing), thoracic discomfort. All the afore mentioned may negatively impact both the quality of life itself and of daily activities.

Even if there are apparently miraculous treatments for bronchial asthma, it still remains a very serious condition, even dangerous, that impact about 300 million persons worldwide.

Asthma symptoms may occur anytime. In easier instances it may take a few minutes and can be treated spontaneously or with medication, but with severe episodes it may last hours and even days.

Due to the fact that both the professional side and the personal one of one's life can be impacted negatively this condition, the asthmatic patients have to cope with stress and

depression. These disorders can lead to poor management of the asthmatic condition, to emotional instability, worsening of the symptoms and even social isolation.

The impact of depression, anxiety and stress with asthmatic patients can be reduced with appropriate medication but non medication treatment also and in this instance we think about psychological counseling and psychotherapy.

Specialized documentation mentions the fact that bronchial asthma patients take a double risk in developing emotional instability, and here we can think about apathy, low self esteem, poor social life, and even low appetite.

Being scientifically proven that asthma is a condition in which the state of mind and the emotions contribute to the acute increase in the severity of the symptoms, we consider of vital importance and adequate to create a plan for the counseling sessions and psychotherapy. This approach will drastically the reduce depression and anxiety, therefore the stress level, which in the end improves the patient's life quality.

The specialized literature mentions a higher comorbidity that corroborates with lower quality of life, and this aspect cannot be associated only with social and financial status or with education, but also with emotional and psychological factors, i.e. personal disposition, anxiety, denial, poor individual relationships. All these can impact negatively the treatment, can lead to dysfunctional monitoring and poor condition management.

Psychological therapy sessions and psychotherapy may highlight the following:

- Understanding of the causes of the condition
- Strategies of muscle relaxation
- Techniques of intervention in behavior
- Cognitive restructuring and stimulation
- Coping capabilities

Patients who are informed about stress induced by the condition can take steps in preventing stressful activities, reducing the risk of exacerbating the symptoms and even their intensity. In the first stage methods of therapeutic relaxation can be used, adjacent to important advice regarding personal life style, change in daily routine that may cause health damage and better understanding of the condition.

Even though the pathophysiology of the condition under scrutiny is clearly defined, the psychological aspects that come together with finding the diagnosis, the capacity are less taken

into account. The highlight stays mainly with the treatment of the condition, while the changes in mood are seen as transient and less important in the main psychopathological framework

An integral plan based on medication but that also include separate psychotherapy (i.e. individual and group psychological therapy sessions) can be benefic for asthmatic patients with depression and anxiety issues.

Research vectors that take into account conditions such as asthma, anxiety, depression and stress can help the patient with a better management planning of the respective conditions and a better understanding of the fact that their association can lead to poor quality of personal life and can negatively impact the treatment. The reactions triggered by the combination between a chronic condition and a psychological disorder depend on the individual features of each patient. For this reason the whole pathological framework should be taken into account besides the human being as a bio-psycho-social model.

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