

# Relevance of anxiety in emergency

Ginés JM, Espluga N, Navines R, Corcoles D, Garnier C, Malagón A, Bulbena A  
IAPS. Psychiatry and Toxicology Service. Hospital del Mar. IMAS. Barcelona

## Introduction

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent psychiatric disorders in the general population. Anxiety disorders are associated with considerable chronicity, morbidity, and disability. This fact has an effect in the Psychiatry Emergency Services, which in many cases are the first contact with the Mental Health Services. Although is a relevant psychiatric disorder, it is frequently undiagnosed, misdiagnosed or untreated.

## Objectives

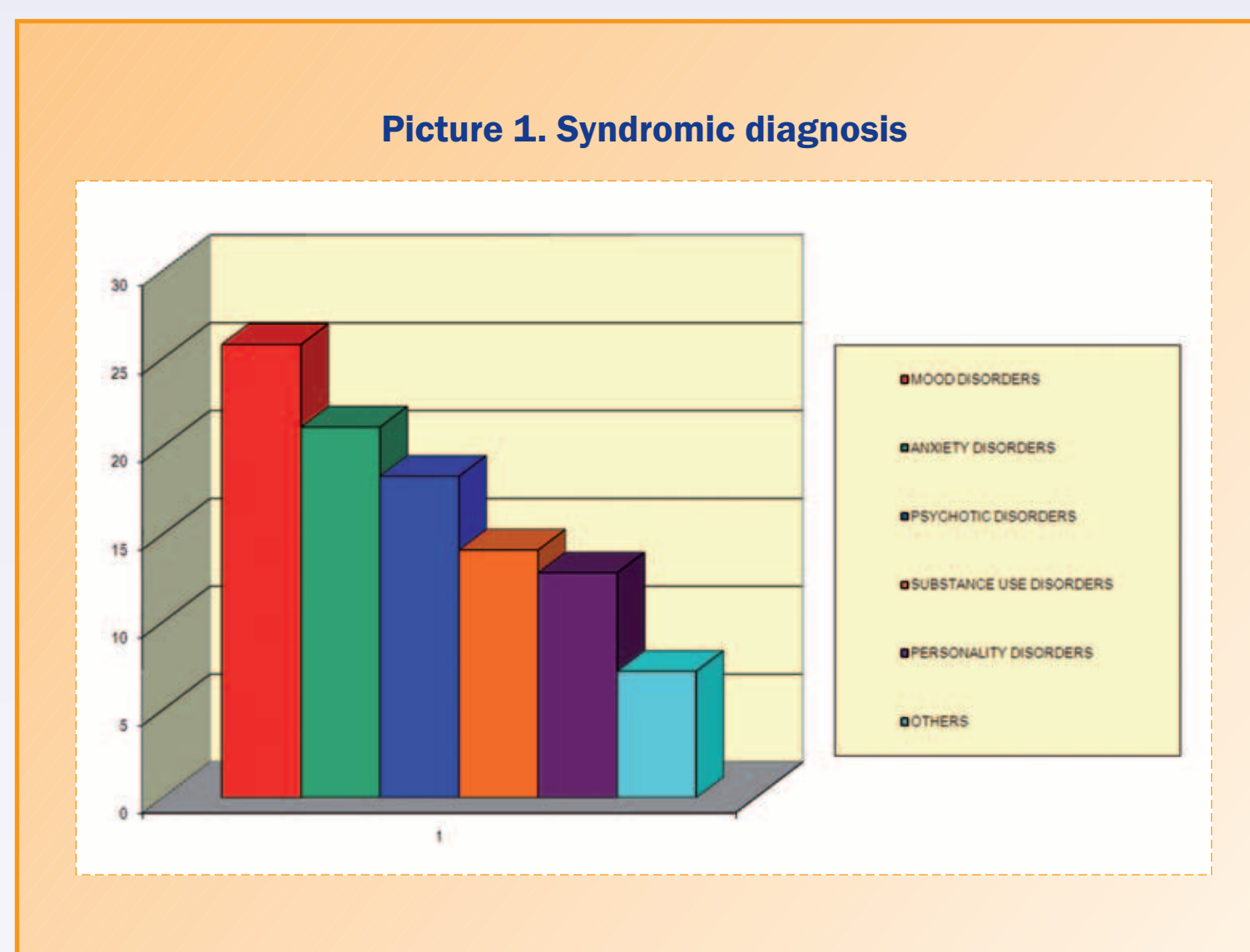
The aim of this study was to describe the socio-demographic and clinical characteristics of all patients assisted in a Psychiatry Emergency Service of a General Academic Hospital in Barcelona during five years (2001-2006).

## Methods

Several clinical data were collected: syndromic diagnosis, psychiatric background, previous and current contact with Mental Health Services, dual diagnosis, hospital discharge, previous treatment and SPI (Psychiatric Severity Illness, scale compounded by 12 subitems rated from 0 to 3, validated in Spanish by Bulbena et al 1997). Likewise, socio-demographic variables, like sex, age, immigrant population, were also collected. Data were analyzed using the SPSS 12.0 software package.

## Results

A total of 11895 consecutive admissions at Psychiatric Emergency Service over a 5-year period were reviewed, with the following general characteristics: 52.4% of the patients assisted were women; the average age was  $40.3 \pm 15.4$ , and there was a 13.2% of immigrant population. In our Emergency Service, anxiety disorders (21.1%) were the most common psychiatric diagnosis after mood disorders (25.8%). **Picture 1.** In **Table 1** we present the socio-demographic variables for anxiety disorders. Clinical data are exposed in **Table 2**.



**Table 1**

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	ANXIETY DISORDERS
SEX	63.8% WOMEN
MEAN AGE	37.5±15
IMMIGRANTS	17.4%

**Table 2**

CLINICAL DATA	ANXIETY DISORDERS
PSYCHIATRIC BACKGROUNDS	34.2%
PREVIOUS CONTACT WITH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE	54.9%
DUAL DIAGNOSIS	7.1%
SPI (TOTAL SCORE)	5.4±3.5
ADMISSIONS	1.7%
GENERAL PRACTITIONERS	25.3%

## Conclusions

1. Our study is comparable to others as far as the anxiety disorders represent one of the most frequent psychiatric diagnostics assisted by the Psychiatric Emergency Services.
2. It appears more often in women, with a lower age than in other pathologies, and less severe in reference to the SPI scale.
3. The emergency service is the first contact with the Mental Health Services in a higher percentage than in other Psychiatric pathologies.
4. There is a higher number of patients that turn to general practitioners than in other diagnosis.

## References

- Bulbena A, Pompei S, Ollé L, Coletas J. Medida de la gravedad de la enfermedad psiquiátrica. Arch Neurobiol 1997;7:69-79.
- Lyons JS, Stutesman J, Neme J, Vessey JT, O'Mahoney MT, Camber HJ. Predicting psychiatric emergency admissions and hospital outcome. Med Care 1997;35:792-800.