



Antenatal Anxiety

Rebekah Pratt

Scottish Primary Care Mental Health
Research and Development Programme

University of Edinburgh

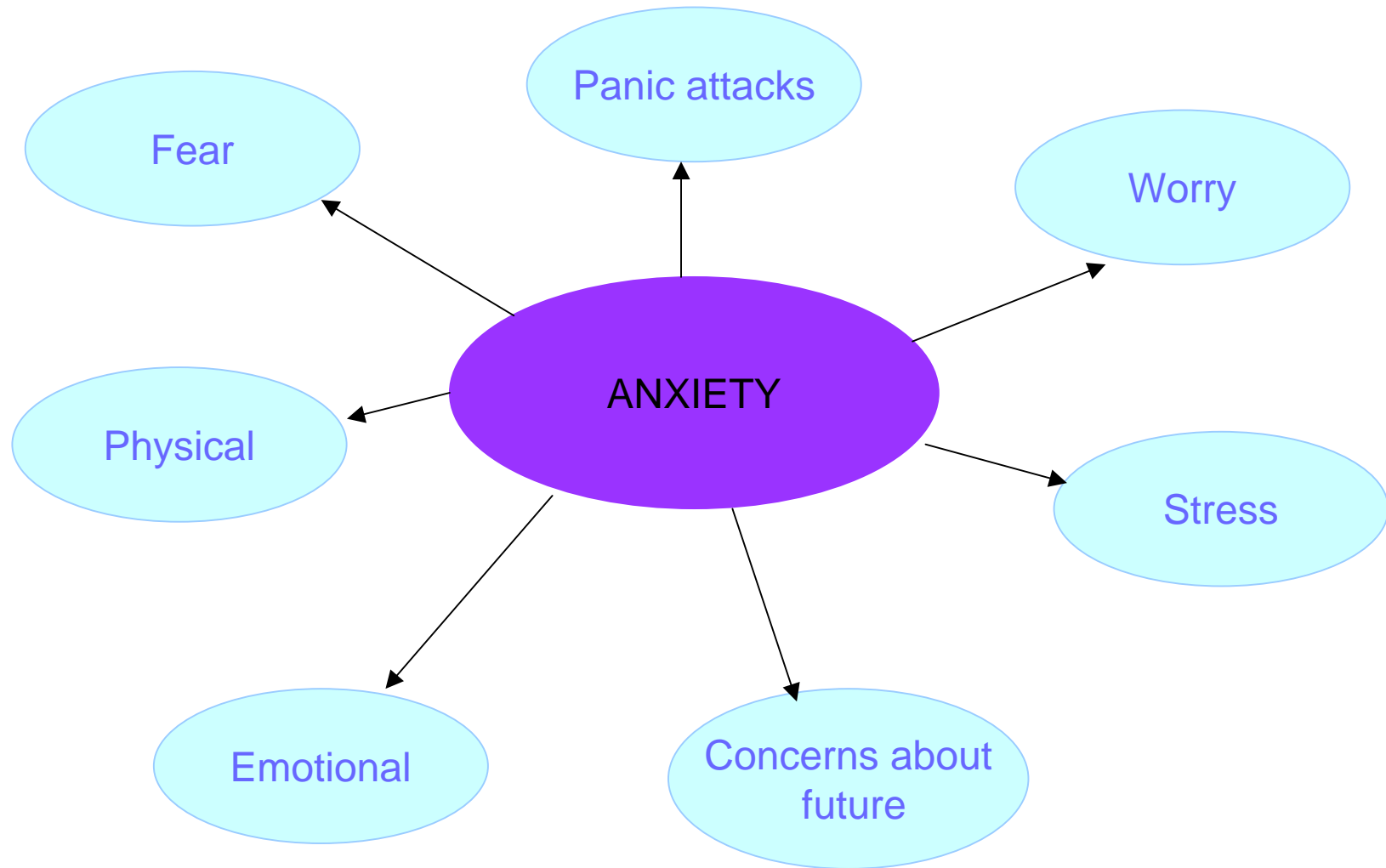
Rebekah.Pratt@ed.ac.uk

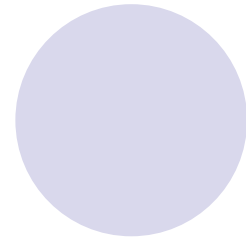
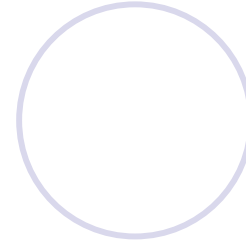
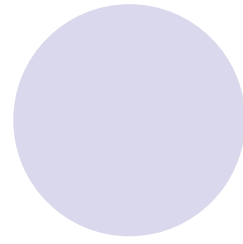
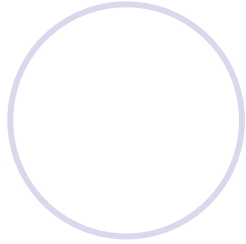
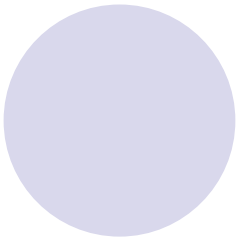


Why am I here today:

- Working with others to develop a research project (Gillian Wilson, Paula Huddart, Margaret Maxwell, Carina Hibberd)
- Sharing what we have learnt so far
- Finding out more together as we continue to develop research

What is anxiety?



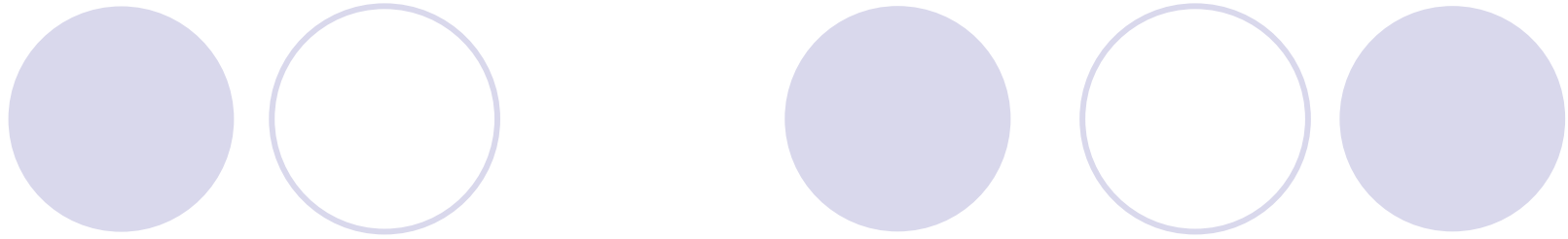


Lennart Nilsson



What does the research literature say:

- Not very much!
- Cortisol crosses the placenta
- Contributes to pre-term labour
- Predictive of PND



- Impact on foetus, potentially leading to long-term consequences into infancy
 - More likely to be mixed handed
 - Low birth weight
 - Language delay
 - Twice the risk of the baby having ADHD symptoms
 - Excessive crying up to 7 months
 - Aggressive behaviours
 - The higher the level of cortisol, the lower the IQ
 - Some effects see to last up to 11 years of age
- May be more important than we thought...



Research in Development

- Prevalence study
- The role of screening
- Women's experiences of anxiety
- Improving anxiety: Evaluating a self-management group approach to managing antenatal anxiety

- *And... what else do you think we need to know more about?*



Women's experience of anxiety

- What contributes to anxiety
 - Pregnancy related?
 - External stressors?
 - Family relationships?
- What, if any, help is wanted
- What sort of interventions would be acceptable

A decorative graphic at the top of the slide consists of two groups of circles. The first group on the left has a solid light purple circle on the left and an outlined light purple circle on the right. The second group on the right has a solid light purple circle on the left, an outlined light purple circle in the middle, and a solid light purple circle on the right.

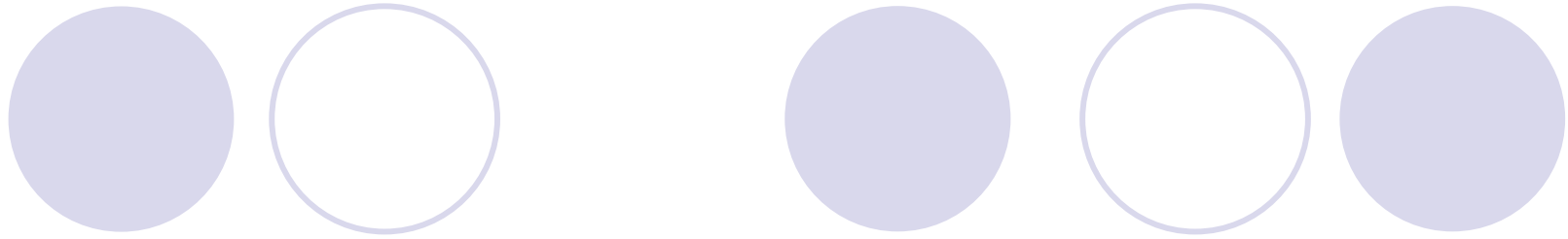
Prevalence

- Not clear
- Most research focuses on depression
Higher than prenatal depression
- Need to establish a clearer picture of prevalence



Screening

- Can we, and should we screen for anxiety?
- How would we screen for anxiety?
 - EPDS
 - ALPHA
 - Antenatal Risk Questionnaire
 - HADS
 - Others?



- If anxiety has psychosocial causes, what questions are we prepared to ask, or women prepared to answer?
 - Social support
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Domestic abuse
 - History of sexual abuse
 - *'Did you feel loved by your parents?'*



Improving anxiety

- What can we do?
- Quite a lot!
- Still learning from the general population, so not much known about antenatal care
- General population interventions or self-help materials still relevant



Different types of interventions

- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Self-help
- Psycho-educational groups
- Relaxation training
- Guided imagery
- Mindfulness
- And more...



Self-management groups

- Antenatal group setting
- Working as a group
- Learning self-management strategies together
- Could be community based
- *Who should be running these sorts of groups?*



The self-help manual

- Written by Nicola Stuckey and Neil Millar
- Key topics
 - Understanding anxiety
 - Bodily feelings of anxiety
 - How thoughts make us anxious
 - How to change behaviour
 - Panic attacks
 - Relaxation
 - Ways to cope with anxiety

Some potential negative consequences?

- ...I was under tremendous stress during my pregnancy and now have a healthy baby boy. At time of birth however, he was diagnosed with IUGR. And now, after reading your article, **i wonder if my stress levels were somehow responsible for the IUGR.** Thankfully he is a healthy and a happy toddler now, **but i fear that he may develop some/any of the emotional/behavioral problems that you write about.**
I will try to do my own internet research on 'sensitive mothering'. But please do share any information that you can. I deeply appreciate your efforts.



Keeping women at the centre...

- How do we stay aware of risks
- Avoid causing alarm
- Retain the need for considering social issues
- Accessible and relevant support



Some links:

- <http://www.summerscience.org.uk/09/exhibit/can-what-happens-in-the-womb-last-a-lifetime>
- www.livinglifetothefull.com
- <http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>
- <http://www.glasgowsteps.com/self-help/anxiety/>