

Researchers Study Excessive Worrying by Adolescents

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A pilot research project at the University of Cincinnati is investigating excessive worrying which interferes with daily functioning, also known as generalized anxiety disorder, in adolescents ages 12-17.

A little worrying is normal at the end of the school year, when final exams stand between students and summer vacation.

Many students, however, worry constantly—over not only tests but also numerous other issues, large and small. And it's at that point that parents should consider getting help, medical experts agree.

A pilot research project at the University of Cincinnati (UC) is investigating excessive worrying which interferes with daily functioning,

also known as [generalized anxiety disorder](#) (GAD), in [adolescents](#) ages 12-17. New enrollees are being accepted, with all inquiries confidential.

"These are kids that generally just worry about everything," says Jeffrey Strawn, MD, a clinical fellow in child and adolescent psychiatry and one of six recipients nationwide of an American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) Pilot Research Award which supports the study. "This [anxiety](#) just subsumes every area of life."

It's perfectly normal to worry about a test, Strawn points out. But the excessive worrier also worries about whether the alarm clock will work that morning, finding the right room for the test and friends' perceptions of him or her, along with more serious issues such as contracting a life-threatening illness or being involved in a serious [car accident](#) on the way to school.

"Adolescents with this kind of anxiety tend not to get treatment for it, even though help is available," adds Strawn. "If they come to a doctor, it's often because of associated symptoms such as stomachaches or headaches."

In addition to excessive worrying, Strawn says, children with GAD often constantly seek reassurance from parents, although "any decrease in anxiety the child would get from that reassurance is often very short-lived," he says, "and then the child would continue to seek more and more reassurance, while continuing to worry."

Using [brain](#) scans, researchers will be looking at specific areas and connections in the front of the brain that govern emotional responses which appear to be exaggerated in anxiety disorders. Using the brain scan, researchers will also study chemicals in one particular region of the brain that have been shown to inhibit those emotional responses.

"We want to explore the functional interrelationships among these different parts of the brain," says Strawn.

Interested parents should call (513) 558-4112. Compensation for time and travel is available.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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