



The Prevalence and Perceived Benefit of Anti-Anxiety Medications Used By Nursing Students in Virginia

Lauren Atkins, Sophomore Nursing Student, Longwood University



Background on Problem

Nursing students often talk about the stress they experience as students in their educational programs. There is very little literature that discusses this issue. However, there are two recent studies that discuss the stress in nursing students and ways students cope with their stress. The studies, both old and new, report sources of stress for nursing students are:

- tests,
- projects and papers,
- clinical experiences
- interactions with faculty and patients (Beck, 1991, Godbey, 1994).

Past studies of nursing students report the use of counseling (Goldberg, 1994), and imagery (Stephens, 1992) as methods students use to cope with their school-related stress.

A 2001 study of medical students reported that talking with others, maintaining close family contacts, taking breaks, meditation, exercise, practicing religious faith, and participating in music and attending concerts were effective coping methods for their stress (Lee, 2001).

One current study reveals sources of stress in nursing students. The most common is academics (studying, tests, workload). The other sources of stress are the clinical setting (work, fear of making mistakes, relationships with patients) and personal/social activities (economic problems, juggling housework with schoolwork) (Pulido-Martos, 2011).

Purpose/ Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the use of prescribed anti-anxiety medications among BSN students in Virginia, and to understand the perceived benefit of the medications to the students.

The research questions are:

1. What is the prevalence and use of prescribed anti-anxiety medications among BSN students in Virginia?
2. What symptoms of anxiety are related to the use of prescribed anti-anxiety medications by BSN students in Virginia?
3. Do BSN students taking prescribed anti-anxiety medications perceive a benefit from them?
4. What other coping methods have BSN students in Virginia attempted in an effort to relieve anxiety?

Results

- Estimated total attendance by conference administrators: 394
- Number of completed and returned surveys: 118
- Response rate: 30%
- Of the 118 completed and returned surveys, 106 stated that they were completed by students in BSN programs. (90%)
- Of the 106 completed by BSN students, 23 students indicated that they were taking prescribed anti-anxiety medication for program related stress (22%). Of note, only 40% of those who stated they had a prescription for anxiety, were actually taking an anti-anxiety medication. Other medications reported by the students were Zolof (24%), Prozac (12%), Lexapro (8%), Celexa (8%).
- Other methods the students reported to help manage their stress were (In order of frequency):
 - Distractions (coloring, movies, video games) (82%),
 - Talking to friends and family (78%),
 - Exercise (52%),
 - Meditation (34%),
 - Counseling (30%),
 - Yoga (26%),
 - Journaling (17%)

Methods/ Participants

This was a descriptive study and consisted of a survey of nursing students attending the annual state-wide conference of The Virginia Nursing Students' Association. The conference was held on February 11th, 2017 at James Madison University. This survey was completed on a volunteer basis and was included in the registration bag of everyone who attended. Once completed it was sealed in an envelope by the participant. This made it 100% anonymous as well as confidential. In return for completing the survey, each participant received a raffle ticket drawn at the end of the event for a Visa gift card. The number of completed surveys was 118. According to the registration table there was approximately 394 people who attended the conference. Out of the 118 turned in surveys, 23 surveys stated that they currently take an anti-anxiety medication.

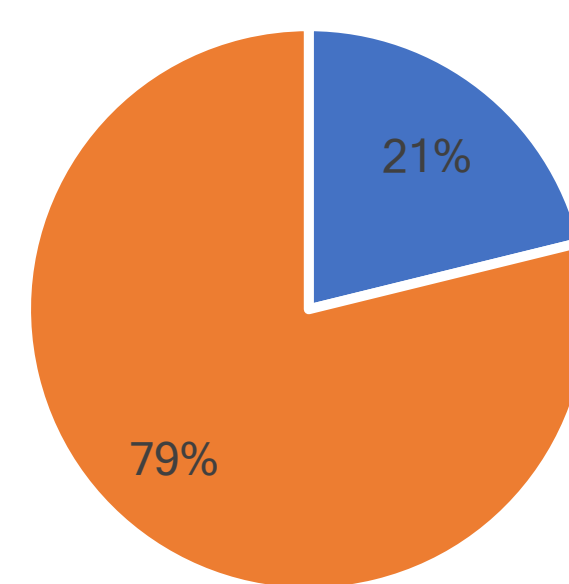
Summary

This study did not show the results originally expected. It was expected that a higher number of nursing students would be taking an anti-anxiety medication. However, the study did show that there are many nursing students that take a medication to get through the stress of nursing school. Many of the students from this survey also take an anti-depressant medication instead of an anti-anxiety. A further study might address the prevalence of depression among these students. Additional research could address other methods of coping with stress.

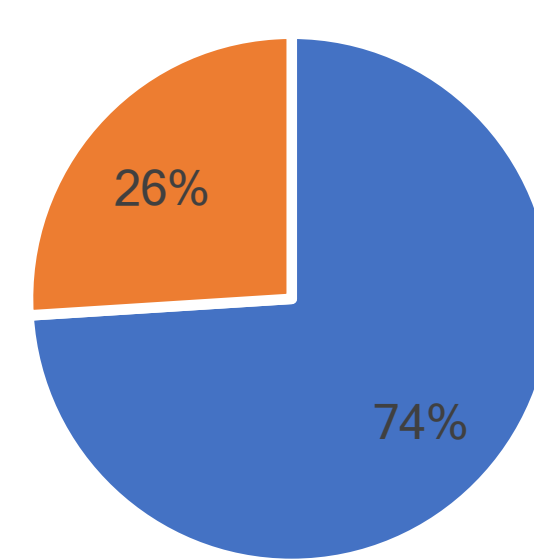
References

- Beck, D., & Srivastava, R. (1991). Perceived level and sources of stress in baccalaureate nursing students. *Journal Of Nursing Education*, 30(3), 127-133.
- Godbey, K., & Courage, M. (1994). Stress-management program: intervention in nursing student performance anxiety. *Archives Of Psychiatric Nursing*, 8(3), 190-199.
- Lee, J., & Graham, A. (2001). Students' perception of medical school stress and their evaluation of a wellness elective. *Medical Education*, 35(7), 652-659.
- Pulido-Martos, M., Augusto-Landa, J.M. and Lopez-Zafra, E. (2012), Sources of stress in nursing students: a systematic review of quantitative studies. *International Nursing Review*, 59: 15-25
- Stephens, R. (1992). Imagery: a treatment for nursing student anxiety. *Journal Of Nursing Education*, 7), 314-320

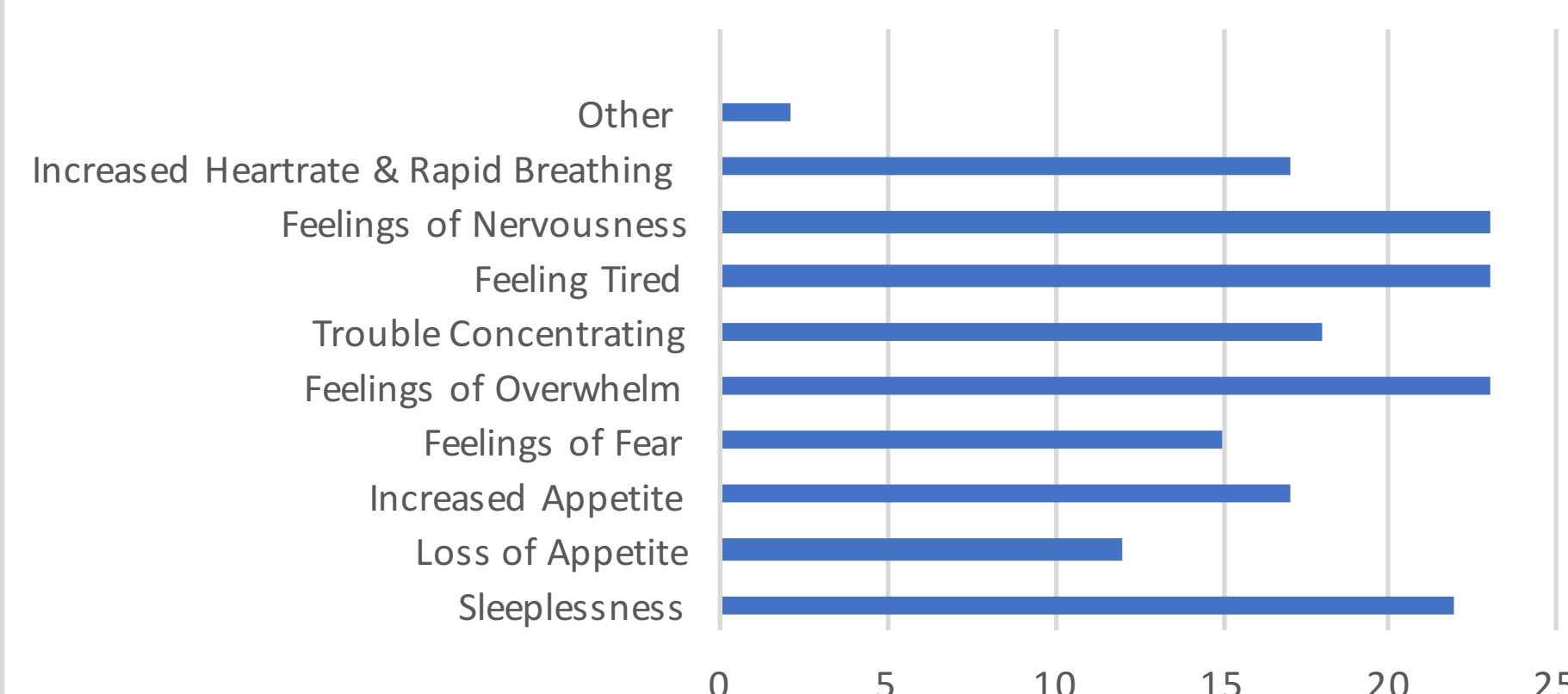
Out of 106 BSN Students in The Study, How Many Take A Medication



Do you believe this medication is helping with your anxiety?



Frequency of Symptoms Experienced in Medicated BSN Participants



Frequency of The Sources That Cause Anxiety in Medicated BSN Participants

