

Adolescent Anxiety and Depression Related to Artificial Intelligence

Presenting Problem:

A pediatrician consulted with the WI CPCP regarding a 17-year-old girl presenting with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. At a well-check visit, the patient scored unusually high on a number of PROMIS subscales. When asked about her symptoms, the patient shared that she planned to go to college, but felt disillusioned by extensive media, family, and peer concerns that AI will eliminate many jobs for young people within the next decade. The patient reported feeling hopeless and without purpose at a time in her life when she perceived she 'should' feel excitement and optimism. As a result, the patient retreated from family and others to avoid conversations about her future. The patient described how she felt isolated, ineffective, anxious, and depressed.

The consultation question to the WI CPCP was, "What are some recommended strategies to help teens and young adults with anxiety and depression related to AI?"

Consultant's Response:

Concerns about AI's potential negative impact on the future job market adds complexity to an already commonly stressful developmental phase of late adolescence. The first recommendation is to address the patient's sense of isolation. Recent research has identified that up to one-half of adolescents or young adults worry that AI will eliminate their job opportunities. Normalizing this as a common stressor can help promote an adolescent's comfort when talking about, and obtaining support for, AI-related distress related to career selection and training. Inviting compassionate conversations about this issue both promotes and exemplifies a strong and trusted relationship between primary care providers and their patients.

As for action steps to discuss with patients, recent literature on AI-related anxiety includes stress management, building AI and non-AI-related job skills, and vocational counseling. Stress management techniques for teens are offered by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry ([Stress Management and Teens](#)) and the American Academy of Pediatrics ([For Teens: Creating Your Personal Stress-Management Plan - HealthyChildren.org](#)).

To enhance career-related self-efficacy, patients can seek out academic or other training experiences to build expertise with AI, as well as focus on developing interpersonal job skills that are outside of AI's scope. This resource from [theconversation.com](#) provides additional information for young people and families. Additionally, engaging in meaningful volunteer activities can enhance a sense of interpersonal connection and networking for future job opportunities.

Finally, it is recommended that adolescents receive career guidance from trained vocational support personnel. Patients can start with their school guidance counselors or other support services. If needed, a referral for psychotherapy can be helpful. In addition to therapists with expertise in general therapeutic techniques, it may be beneficial in these cases to refer to a vocational/career counselor because of vocational counseling's focus on career decisions and navigating job-related stress.

As the world continues to change, it is so valuable for adolescents to experience the benefits of a consistent relationship with a primary care provider. The WI CPCP team also appreciates the ongoing relationships that our team has built with primary care providers throughout the state. If there are

additional questions about these or any other mental health concerns, please feel free to reach out.
We are here to help!